

After the Fall

by misscam

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Summary: A devastating loss turns Frank and Rachelâ€™s world upside down, and a quest for revenge begins. But will grief tear them apart?

1. Part One

After the Fall

>By Camilla Sandman <p>

Disclaimer: Oh pleeeeeeeease! Like you don't know I'm Hal McElroy in disguise, living out what he really wanted to happen to Rachel and Frank..g

Author's Note: Oh â€“ My â€“ God! This fic is a total of 25, 000 something words.. which means I beat Vanessa! I did it, I did it! rambles on for about half an hour Thanks to my faithful beta-readers, to Julia, Jaye, Sim, Ky, Sarah, Suz and Vanessa, who told me to go for itâ€| and I did it! WOOOOOOHOOOOOO!

Remedium amoris.-- The cure for love is still in most cases that ancient radical medicine: love in return.

II

The ocean washed against the shore as the sun came up over the horizon and spread it's light over the commotion around the beach house. Sirens filled the air, as well as loud voices.

"How the hell did this happen!"

"We don't know yetâ€|Calm down Jack!"

The sounds of fast tires against the pavement as yet another car pulled up stopped their discussing short. They both watched the third man approach them, obvious concern painted all over his face. Neither wanted to be the one to break it to him.

"What's going on?" Frank Holloway asked as he reached his boss Jeff Hawker and his.. colleague Jack Christie outside the house. Rachel's house. It was crawling with cops, and he'd seen an ambulance as well. If something had happened to Rach.. he refused to let his mind go there.

"Frank..." Hawker began, then stopped, unsure of how to continue.

"What IS going on!" Frank repeated, willing them to tell him it was nothing.

"Look mate.. Rachel.." Jack began, then he stopped short too.

"That is.. David, he.." Jack tried again, but once again failed to complete the sentence.

"David's dead," came the clear voice from the door, and all turned to look at Rachel standing in the doorway. She looked horrible. It looked as if someone had spraypainted her with blood.. for a horrible second Frank thought it was hers, then he realized it was David's and felt even more horrible.

"Rach.." he whispered, and she met his eyes. She looked like a caged animal.. calm now, but about to burst. Her eyes were so dry he suspected she was still in shock. Her expression told him nothing.. it was just blank. He didn't realize he had stepped forward until he reached out to touch her face.

"Rach.." he whispered again.

"Frank.. Iâ€| I.."

"Hush, you don't have to say anything."

"He killed him Frank.. he killed him!" She pounded her fists at his chest, and he just stood there, letting her, trying to fathom what she was feeling. He couldn't. He couldn't even begin to. So he let her pound on. After a while she seemed to run out of energy, and just fell against his chest.

"He killed him.." she said disbelievingly.

"Who?" Jack asked, but she didn't lift her gaze from Frank.

"The man.. he was hooded. He had a shotgun.. he went straight for David.. I.."

"It can wait Rachâ€|"

"No," she insisted, "it can't. It can't! IT CAN'T!"

"Okay.. okay.. whatever ya wanna do, okay?" he said reassuringly, and she just nodded. She still hadn't shed a tear, he realized.

"Miss?" One of the ambulance women came to them. "Miss, we need to check you out."

"But Iâ€|" she protested, but only half-heartedly.

"Goldstein! Go!" Hawker ordered, and it seemed to work, for she just nodded slowly, and let herself be led away. Frank stared after her, wondering how she would do when the shock wore off.. and she truly understood what had happened.

He had the scariest feeling of loosing her.

As the ambulance drove away, he looked down at his chest, and realized it was covered in blood. David's blood. Without knowing it he balled his hands into fists. Whoever had done this.. he would find him.. and then!

He would kill him.

II

Water Police HQ " same day

"I just can't believe it," Tayler said for the fourth time in 2 minutes. The others, Syksie, Tommy and Dave, didn't even comment on it.

The word had spread fast all over the station, and everyone had taken the news with disbelief. Rachel's David was dead.. murdered. By some wacko with a shotgun. Who would kill such an innocent boy, just gun him down?

"How could this happen?" Sykes said quietly. The others shrugged their shoulders, unable to even wrap their minds around that it really had happened. Rachel's son was dead. And no matter how many times they repeated it to themselves, it just wouldn't sink in.

Helen came in, walking slowly, as if in a trance. She seemed to have cried, her cheeks were flustered, her eyes swollen. She looked like hell

"How is she!" came 4 immediate questions.

"In shock. She was there.. he got killed in front of her eyes," Helen explained, trying to keep the tears away. "He was such a good boy!"

"Helen, can I see you in my office?" came Hawker's voice droning from above.

"Coming," she replied, then gave the others a half-hearted shrug. They looked after her with obvious concern, then return to their own haunting thoughts.

And in everyone's mind a terrible picture of little David being shot down appeared, and would stay there for weeks, resurfacing in nightmares for year to come.

He had just been a boy. Just.. a boy. Who would kill such an innocent little kid?

II

Flash.

"_Mommy?" came David's clear voice._

_ "Yes, hon?" _

_ "There's someone at the door." _

_ "I didn't hear the doorbell." _

_ "But he's there." _

_ "I'll just take this out of the ovenâ€|. " _

_ "MOOOOOOOOM! " _

Flash.

She blinked away the memory, refusing to acknowledge it. If she wouldn't acknowledge it, it wouldn't have happened. It hadn't happened. It hadn't!

"It happened," a little voice inside her kept insisting, it was droning on constantly, repeating "David is dead. It happened. David is dead. It happened."

Her mind just wouldn't register it. The subject, "David", it had no trouble grasping, but the following phrase "is dead" was more troublesome. David.. is dead. David is dead. David is dead. David is dead. It just didn't make sense.

They'd taken her to the hospital, treating her like a kid, leading her by the elbows. She didn't have the strength to yell at them, to howl at them not to pretend they understood. They couldn't. No one could. The doctor had offered her a sedative. She refused to take it, already feeling numb and distant. It was as if it didn't really affect her, but some other person.

Finally they had left her on an examining table. She just sat there, staring into the air.

"Rach?"

She knew that voice. It was Frankâ€| Frank.

"Frank?"

"Yeah, I'm here. You okay?" As soon as he had said it, he could have kicked himself for saying it. Of course she wasn't okay. Her kid had been murdered, for crying out loud! She was far from okay!

"Okay," she repeated, "am I okay?"

"That's not what I meant.. I justâ€|"

"Am I okay!" she cried out, and he winced at the obvious anger in her voice, knowing he wasn't the source of it, but that it was directed at him.

"I'm sorry, I just meantâ€|" he tried to explain, but she cut him short, her voice practically shaking with anger.

"Piss off Frank!"

"No," he replied, knowing she had to get it out. She had to snap out of the shock, or she would never be able to grieve.

"Just piss off.. Piss off! PISS OFF!"

"No," he insisted, and finally she couldn't hold it in anymore, and the tears emerged. She fell against his chest, and he wrapped her into his arms, stroking her back. The noises she was making sounded like those of a wounded animal, and his shoulder were becoming wet with tears. He had to fight the anger emerging, directed at whoever did this, Rachel didn't need him angry right now. It would be time for that later. For now, he just held her, making soothing noises. He had no idea what to say.. What could anyone say? She cried and she cried and she cried until there was no tears left in her. He held her a little while longer, silently.

Finally she broke away a little, his hands stayed wrapped around her though.

"Frankâ€|" she pleaded, not knowing exactly what she pleaded for.

"I'm so sorry. I'm so, so sorry," he said, willing her to understand that he meant it. She nodded slightly.

"I knowâ€| Why Frank? Why?"

"I dunno. But I'm gonna find out, okay? I'm gonna find out who did this," he promised. She just nodded in return. She believed him. He wiped away the tears from her cheek, then planted a gentle kiss on her forehead.

"If you need anythingâ€|" he began, and once again she nodded slightly.

"There's some detectivesâ€| They want to talk to you. I can tell them to go awayâ€|"

"No," she whispered.

"Okayâ€| Do you want me to stay?" he asked gently

"Yesâ€| Please stayâ€|"

"Okay," he replied, and freed himself from the embrace. "I'll be right back."

Once again he got only a nod in reply, but he took that as any encouragement to leave the room.

He was back in a matter of seconds, two suited detectives in tow. She had met them before.. but she couldn't remember when or where.

"Detective Goldstein? I'm Peter Adams, and this is Bryan Webster. Are

you sure you're up to this?"

"Yeah," she replied, and Frank gave her an encouraging nod.

"Can ya tell us what happened?"

She nodded, then took a deep breath and told them.

Told them all.

II

"_Mom?" David asked from the living room._

_ "Yeah?"_

_ "How long until dinner is ready?"_

_ "Just be a few minutes now!" she replied, looking at the oven. She heard him wander around impatiently, and she smiled, imagining his expression. She looked at the oven once again. Just a few more minutes, she figured._

_ "Mommy?" came David's clear voice._

_ "Yes, hon?"_

_ "There's someone at the door." Strange. At this hour?_

_ "I didn't hear the doorbell."_

_ "But he's there."_

_ "I'll just take this out of the ovenâ€|. "_

_ "MOOOOOOOOM!" came the desperate cry, and she dropped the plate. It fell to the floor, breaking into a thousand pieces. She didn't notice as she ran into the living room. Just as she entered it, the first shot went off. It hit David squarely in the chest and threw him against the wall which immediately got colored red._

_ She froze in the doorway, her eyes wide in shock. The shooter was standing in the hallway, and fired again. He was a tall man, masked, clothed in dark. He was Death._

_ She shrieked. An inhuman sound even to herself, containing grief, anger, shock and desperation. And she waited for the shot to hit her, to the blackness to engulf her and whisk away the pain._

_ It didn't come. Instead the shooter just spat on the floor and ran out. Only then could she move, and she ran to David, to the pool of blood._

_ "Mom.. it.. hurtsâ€|" he whispered as life poured out of him. She wanted to say something, to ease the pain, to tell him it would be alright, but her mouth was dr. No matter how hard she worked it, no sound came out._

_ "Moooooommyâ€|." He cried and fell limp in her arms. Only then could she find the words._

_ "David, David, no, God.. David! DAVID!" she cried, while shaking his tiny body as if it would bring him back to life. She didn't even realize she got covered in blood as she tried to breathe life into him. It was no good, but her mind refused to accept that. He wasn't dead. He couldn't possibly be dead._

But there was so much bloodâ€| So much blood.

"So much bloodâ€|" she finished, looking up at the two detectives. They exchanged glances, then got up.

"That's it for now, but we may need to talk to you again."

"Yeah, of course," she replied, her voice giving away no emotion at all.

"Detective Holloway, may we have a word?"

Frank glanced over at Rachel, who gave him a slight nod, then followed the two detectives out in the hallway.

"I understand you and Detective Goldstein are partners?" Adams asked.

"Yeah."

"You are close?"

"What kind of bloody question is that!" he shot back, defensively.

"A reasonable one," Adams replied, "you're a cop. You know how this works."

They stared at each other for another couple of seconds, before Webster cut in.

"We'd just like to know if you knew her and her son well."

"Yes, yes I did," Frank replied to Webster, ignoring Adams for now. He didn't like him, he decided.

"And she had a good relationship with her son?" Webster asked.

"The best," Frank replied, "she loved him. He was.. the center of her universe."

"But the father had custody," Adams shot in.

"The father is a jerk who just happens to be a smart-arse lawyer!"

Frank forced himself to take another calming breath, reminding himself getting angry now was not a good idea.

"So there was openly hostility between her andâ€| " Adams paused to check his notes, "Jonathon Goldstein."

"They didn't see eye to eye on a few thingsâ€|" Frank admitted.

"So, would you say she took this out onâ€|"

"What!" Frank shot in, "she took it out on David, is that what you're trying to say!"

"Detective Holloway, I'm merelyâ€|. Adams began, but to no avail.

"You think she did it!" Frank roared, "you think she killed her own son!"

"I didn'tâ€|" Adams tried to explain, but got cut short.

"You bloody well did!"

"Calm down," Webster interrupted, "we have to look into every possibility. As a cop I'm sure you can understand that."

"She loved David more than her life," Frank said after taking a calming breath, "she was the best mom."

"Thank you for your time, Detective," Webster quickly said, "we'll be in touch."

As the two marched down the corridor, Frank heard Adams mutter "bastard" under his breath. He didn't mind. The feeling was, after all, mutual. He took one more calming breath, then went into the hospital room again.

She was still sitting there, staring at her hands intently, as if she still saw traces of blood on them.

"Rachel?" he called out.

"So much blood Frank.. There was so much blood," she whispered. He put his hands around her, not really knowing what to do.

For in the end you carried grief alone. Sure, people would be around you, support you, give you a hug when you needed one and listen to you bitch about how unfair it was. But when it came down to it, in the darkness where you could not hide from your thoughtâ€| You carried the grief alone.

All alone.

II

When Jack poked his head into the room a few minutes later, he found them like that, Rachel staring at her hands while an obvious worried Frank held her closely. Neither looked up as he walked in, and he had the oddest feeling of trespassing.

He coughed discreetly, but still got no reaction what so ever. They looked frozen in time.

"Heyaâ€|" he called up, and finally Frank looked up.

"Jack," he acknowledged, his voice completely lacking any emotions. Again the feeling of trespassing reappeared, as if he was intruding,

Jack noted.

"Howâ€¢! How is she?"

"I am in the room," came Rachel's voice, and she finally looked up at him.

"Don't talk about me like I'm not in the room!" Her voice was rising, but not with anger. He held out his hands in defeat, not wanting to upset her.

"I'm sorry," he apologized, and she seemed to accept it.

"Gentlemenâ€¢! I'll have to ask you both to leave now," the entering doctor exclaimed. His professional tone annoyed Frank for some reason, the punk was.. what, half his age?

"Come on Frank," Jack said, taking a step towards the door.

"I'll be right outside, okay Rach?" Frank asked, giving her one final hug.

"Yeahâ€¢!" she muttered in reply, and he stood up and walked to the door with Jack. He didn't want to leave her, afraid if he let her out of his gaze just a second she's slip away, but the doctors knew what they were doing.

As soon as they had stepped outside, he could feel Jack's angry gaze at him.

"What!" he snapped.

Jack shrugged his shoulders a bit, but Frank didn't buy it for a second.

"Don't start this jealousy crap!" he exclaimed.

"What the bloody hell are you talking about?" Jack snapped back.

"Me and her, and you and her. I don't know what the hell you two are to each other, but she is my best friend, and my partner!" Frank shouted, feeling an urge to slap the guy.

"That doesn't mean you own her!"

"It gives me the right to be there!"

"And I don't have that right!" Jack fumed, and they stopped to glare at each other.

"It's her call to make, Frank," Jack reminded him.

"I think she already has mate," Frank shot back, and Jack never had a chance to reply, because at that moment the doctor joined them.

"What the hell do you two think you're doing yelling in a hospital like that? And to your information, we could hear you both quite clearly in there. Now, do I have to make security drag you

out?"

"No," both men replied, their heads hanging a bit.

"For your sake I hope you never behave like that in a hospital ever again," the doctor exclaimed, and went back to the room, leaving the two staring at each other like two rivaling rhinos.

He could practically hear the Serengeti drums.

II

Hawker entered the hospital a few hours later, and found two very impatient Detectives sitting in the hallway. From the glances they were sending each other, he could tell either wasn't happy having the other there.

"Jeff," Frank greeted.

"How is she?"

"In shock," Jack replied, getting a glare from Frank.

"Well, we have finished going over her house. David was shot with a shotgun, ballistics will reveal what kind."

"Any witnesses?" Frank asked, hoping to God it was.

"Besides Rachel.. Not really. A young lady thinks she saw a dark jeep coming from the direction of Rachel's house, but she couldn't tell what the license read."

Frank closed his eyes, the strain of the night beginning to tear on him.

"Holloway, I want you to look over Rachel's old cases.. see if anyone has sworn revenge on her Anything that sticks out."

"But I want to stay here!" he protested.

"Do as I say, Holloway, visiting hours are long over anyway."

"Alright," he threw his hands up in defeat, and stalked out.

The two looked after him.

"You're gonna hafta keep him away from Rach at gunpoint," Jack remarked.

"If I hafta, I will. And that goes for you too. She just had the shock of her life. Last thing I need are you two butting heads over who will be the most supportive, is that clear?"

"Perfectly, sir," Jack replied.

Jeff gave him an encouraging nod, then got up to check on Rachel. He had a feeling a gun was just what he needed to keep those two away, no matter what they said.

II

She had a feeling it was morning. She didn't quite know why, but she had a distinctive feeling it was morning. Right about now she should have been dropping David off to school.

She stopped to think a bit about that. Why wasn't she? It all felt so dim, so far away, it took her several minutes to figure out she thought it was morning because the sun was getting up and morning sun was filling her room. So why was she just lying her?

She strained to lift her hand, but her muscles didn't seem to cooperate. Her mind felt foggy, but the fog was lifting slowly.

She was in a hospital, that she was sure off. Had she been shot? No, didn't feel like it. But there had been a shooting, someoneâ€|

The blood drained from her face.

"David," she whispered, "David! DAVID!"

"Rachel! Hush, it's alright," came a voice, and she lifted her gaze to see Jack sitting in a chair across the room.

But it wasn't. It would never be okay again, never ever okay.

"David," she whispered again.

"I'm so sorry Rach," Jack said, while approaching her bed. She was so pale it was starting to scare him.

"Tell me it's a nightmare," she begged, "tell me I'll wake up soon."

"I'm sorryâ€|" he once again offered, taking her hand. She immediately jerked it away.

"TELL ME IT'S A NIGHTMARE!"

"Rachel, calm down," came a new voice, this time it was Frank, just entering her room. She stared at him widely, then at Jack, both faces filled with sympathy, compassion, pity.

It wasn't a nightmare.

Frank approached the bed also, shooting Jack a glance she couldn't quite read.

"Have they found him, Frank?" she asked, willing him to tell her they had.

"Not yet.. They'veâ€|" he stopped dead as someone else entered the room. Jonathon.

"Rachel," he greeted.

"Jonathon," she replied, and they stared at each other for an eternity or two. Then he slowly went to the bed, and kissed her gently on the forehead.

"I miss him too," he offered, and walked out. She looked after him, then closed her eyes, remembering David's father when she had loved him, and remembering David, who she had never stopped loving. And the tears came, uninvited, washing away all anger, all happiness, leaving only sorrow.

The two men shifted a bit, looking at each other, trying to see who should comfort her.

"Jack," she whispered, "you and Frank find this guy."

"We will," he promised.

"Yeah, we will," Frank agreed

"Then go... Go!" she urged, not wanting to fall to pieces in front of them. They both nodded, and left quietly, Frank with one last "We'll find him."

And then she cried, even if she had no tears left.

II

Water Police HQ ¦ later the same day

"Any luck with the past arrests, Frank?" Jack asked, trying not to yawn.

"Nope, nothing sticks out so far. And those who do, are either dead or behind bars. I feel like I'm looking for a needle in a haystack," Frank exclaimed, slamming the file onto the table.

"You have any luck?" he added a few seconds later.

"Nope," Jack answered, "this guy has been careful not to leave any clues."

"Bloody bastard," Frank muttered under his breath.

"Yeah.. gunning down a child like that!"

Something clicked in Frank's mind as he heard Jack say that.

"Hang on.. She said that the shooter went right for David," he said

"Yeah, he probably wanted to hurt her as badly as he could," Jack said, not seeing Frank's point.

"But David had two parents. This guy could be out to hurt Jonathon," Frank pointed out.

They looked at each other.

"We could be looking at the wrong parent," Jack said slowly.

"Yeah.. Jonathon's a bastard.. he could have made plenty of enemies," Frank stated, feeling his mind shift into a faster gear. If the killer had been out to hurt Jonathon..

"Come on!" he exclaimed, "let's have a chat with Jonathon.."

"The bastard," he added silently. If Rach had lost her son because that bastard had gotten himself involved in something fishyâ€|

He would lock the guy up and throw away the key. After he had punched his lights out.

II

"What makes you so sure he'll be home?" Jack asked as they pulled up in the driveway.

"He will be," Frank simply replied.

"Looks like he has company though," he added when noting the green Mazda parked right in front of the house.

"Maybe we shouldâ€|" Jack began, but he got interrupted when two guys walked out of the house.

"Adams and Webster," Frank noted sourly.

"They're handling the case?"

"Yeah."

"I know them. Webster's okay, Adams can beâ€|"

"A pain," Frank added empathetically.

"Occasionally, yes. Looks like they're heading our way," Jack observed, when the two saw them and changed heading.

Frank rolled down his window.

"Detective Holloway.. Jackâ€|" Adams said, obviously not very happy seeing them there. "You're not trying to look into the case, now are you?"

"Us?" Frank said, putting on his best surprised look, "wouldn't dream off it. We're just here to offer our condolences."

"Jack?" Webster asked, but Jack just gave him a shrug in return.

"As Frank said, we're just here to offer our condolences."

"Knowing you Jack.. I doubt it. So I'm gonna say this as clearly as I can: Stay away from the case. You're both too emotionally involved. Am I perfectly, crystal clear?" Webster asked.

"Clear as the day, mate," Frank replied. With one last warning look the two detectives marched to their car, and drove away.

"I hope they're not friends of you, Jack," Frank remarked dryly as they got out of the car.

"Nah. I don't have any friends."

"Ya know Jack, that I can believe," Frank said as he rang the doorbell.

To their surprise, Jonathon himself opened.

"You two," he sighed.

"We were hoping to have a chat with you, mate," Jack said, trying to sound as polite as he could. He had already decided he didn't like the guy, and for once, Frank seemed to share his view.

"You and the rest of the worldâ€| But do come in," Jonathon replied, opening the door fully to allow them entrance.

"Thank you," Frank offered, then marched in after Jack.

"You're probably not here to offer your condolences," Jonathon stated as they walked through the hallway.

"Right on," Jack replied.

"You think I have something to do with David's killing? He was my son!"

"Exactly. If someone wanted to get back at you, that would be a good way," Frank pointed out. Jonathon laughed humorlessly in reply.

"Me? Isn't it more likely that someone would want to get back at my ex-wife? She is a cop, she makes enemies every day."

"We don't think the target was her," Jack replied.

"The two other cops seemed to think so."

"Yes, but they don't know you. I do," Frank simply stated

"You think you do, Holloway. Just because you're getting it on with my ex, does not mean you know me."

Jack shot Frank a questioningly glare, but he didn't bother to return it, instead he just kept his stare on Jonathon.

"Even if I am, as you say, 'getting it on with your ex', it doesn't change that fact that you're a bastard."

"That's it. I'm not going to take this crap from you two, especially since you have no reason to be here in the first place. Get out! If I see either of you here again, I'm gonna sue you both for harassment!"

"Let's go Frank," Jack said, almost pulling him out. The door was slammed shut hard behind them, informing them of just how unwelcome a return would be.

"What the hell was that!" Jack asked as soon as they approached the car.

"What the hell was what?"

"All that 'getting it on with your ex' stuff."

"None of your concern, Jack," Frank shot back.

"Now listen.."

"No, you listen. That guy is a bastard, and I know he's hiding something. Let's just concentrate on finding out what!"

"Fine," Jack snapped.

"Fine," Frank snapped back, "And I'm driving!"

"No, I'm driving!" They locked stares, neither willing to back down.

"Look, Jack.. if this is going to work.."

"We should call a truce," Jack offered.

"Yeah, something like that.. We both want what's right for Rachel, and that includes finding this shooter."

"Okay.. truce."

"Truce," Frank concluded, and extended his hand. Jack shook it after only a moment's hesitation.

"But who's gonna drive?"

II

"Miss Goldstein?" the doctor asked, "are you sure you don't want anyone to pick you up?"

"No, no, I am okay," she replied, heading towards the door.

"Miss Goldstein, I insistâ€|" he began, but she was already out of the room. She couldn't breath there.

Finally outside, she took a deep breath.

"Calm down. Be in control. You'll get through this," she firmly told herself. She suddenly realized she had no means of getting home since her car wasn't there.

"Okay, no problem, I'll take a taxi," she told herself. That was a good plan. A taxi. Home. Homeâ€|

"Rachel?" came Helen's voice, and she turned around to see Helen about to enter the building.

"I was just coming too se you," she explained, "what are you doing out here?"

"I was released," Rachel stated, and saw the flash of doubt on Helen's face.

"Are you sure.."

"I'm fine Helen!" she snapped, "just don't behave like my mom,

okay!"

"Alright, alrightâ€|"

"I just had to get out," she whispered, "David's funeral is tomorrow, I have toâ€|"

"I'll take you to your father's house," Helen offered, and Rachel just nodded, letting herself be lead away. It was totally unlike her, which worried Helen more than she was able to express.

It was as if Rachel was only a shadow of herself, the real her stuck somewhere else, grieving.

II

"I don't think we'll get much more done tonight," Jack exclaimed, yawning.

"Uh huh," Frank muttered, totally engrossed in the autopsy report.

"How did ya get your hands on a copy of that anyway?" Jack asked, reaching for a cup of coffee.

"I got my secrets, Christey," Frank replied, still not looking up.

"Yeahâ€| So.. wanna head out of here?"

"Yeah, okay, doesn't look like we'll get more done tonight," Frank stated, throwing the report into his drawer.

"Buy you a beer?"

"As long as the toast is for David."

"And Rachel," Frank insisted.

"And Rachel."

And with that they turned off the lights in the office and walked out.

II

She awoke that day to sunshine, and for some reason that angered her. It should have rained. It should have been a gray, misty, sad day. Not birds singing, sun shining. It was just an illusion.

An illusion that everything was fine, that life could go on, that the morning brought something new.

She pushed away the blankets, got up and walked into the bathroom. Her auto-pilot was on, she noted, and let it take her through the morning rituals. Her mind was elsewhere, replaying scenes of her life over and over and over.

And always with David as the main character. Over and over again he fell dead into her arms, and she stared at the blood, just stared

like it was an alien being.

And she washed her hands, scrubbed them, and then washed them again. She was sure there were still traces of blood on them that just wouldn't go away. So she scrubbed and scrubbed and scrubbed, but it was still there. It wouldn't go away.

"Rachel?" came her father's gentle voice. She wasn't sure what she replied, but it made him go away, to leave her alone. As his footsteps grew distant, she leaned against the sink and cried.

She cried because it was sunshine, because her hands wouldn't get clean, because she'd hafta face reality, because she could no longer lie to herself.

There was no where left to run now, no corner to curl up in to avoid facing the truth. It was staring her in the face, even when she closed her eyes.

She was going to David's funeral.

How she got up, or out of the bathroom, she didn't really know, but she soon found herself being guided into a crowded church. She saw Helen, Jeff, Jack and Frank, all looking worried at her. She tried to give them an assuring smile, a smile that said "don't-worry", but her face refused to cooperate.

Her mind wasn't communicating with her body. They seemed to be in two different places. She remembered seeing how green the grass was, how alive it seemed. For some reason it made her want to tear it all up, burn it all and cover it with earth. Grass shouldn't be this green. Not now.

The rest of the funeral was a haze. She heard the words spoken, but they had no meaning to her, neither did the prayers. They were just words. Words couldn't express her loss, or her pain.

She didn't cry. She managed to keep her eyes dry all the way through the service, till they entered the cemetery, David's final resting place. The one red rose she had brought, she was holding so hard the thorns cut into her palm, but she didn't feel that pain, for another pain was too overwhelming.

The pain in her heart. And suddenly it was her time to say goodbye, to approach the grave. She didn't think her legs would support her, but they did, and she walked up to the dark hole.

It was such a small coffin. She stared blindly at it, trying to comprehend. That was David. Her David. Pain grabbed hold, she wanted to howl with grief, to hold on to the coffin and never let go. Instead she just stood there, staring.

"Rachel!" came her father's gentle voice, and she met his eyes, seeking comfort. She saw her own grief echoed there, and suddenly it was too overwhelming, too much. She stumbled, and fell down on her knees.

Frank was beside her in an instant, and she didn't have the strength to push him away. So she let herself be lifted up, to be guided away to another part of the cemetery. Her limbs seemed to have lost all

strength, she was like a porcelain doll in his arms, moving only when he made her.

He couldn't think of anything to say. Words seemed so hollow, so pointless. They wouldn't ease her pain, or make it go away.

Her eyes seemed so large, but they were dry, no traces of tears.

"She has to cry," he thought frantically, "she has to cry or I'll lose her."

She was still clinging onto the rose, and he suddenly saw that her hands were bleeding. He tried to release her grip from it, but she held on.

"Rachel.. you're bleedingâ€|" he tried to explain to her, but she just stared at him, as if the words made no sense. Finally she looked at her hands.. and screamed.

It was a scream that made his hair stand on end, almost inhuman, and he realized it was the blood who caused it. She had finally let go of the rose though, and he took her palms gently in his hands, removing the thorns and wiping away the blood.

She didn't seem to notice.

"It's still there," she whispered, "it's still there. It won't go away."

"Rachel, come," her father called, and she got up, falling into his arms as they walked away. Frank could only stare after them, his heart bleeding for her.

Slowly, he picked up the rose and walked up to the grave. He didn't know what to say or do, so he just stood there, looking at the dark hole and the little coffin.

"Good luck, mate," he finally said, and placed the rose carefully on the grass.

II

Jack paced around in the room, feeling uncomfortable. Wakes really wasn't his thing. He didn't know what to say, or even how to approach Rachel, who seemed to be in some kind of daze. He'd tried to tell her he was sorry at the funeral, but she had just jerked away. Frank didn't seem to have that much luck either.

She was shutting them both out.

"Hey Jack," Frank said, coming from behind him.

"Frank," he acknowledged.

"She's not taking it well, is she?" Jack stated, getting a head shake from Frank.

"I've never seen her this.. shaken up. She's totally out of control, andâ€|"

"You're worried," Jack finished.

"Ain't you?"

"Yeah.. I just don't know what to do for her."

"Finding the killer is a good start," Frank remarked, staring at the sky.

"We will," Jack said confidently.

"Yes, we will," Frank agreed, and the two men locked their gazes in a gesture of understanding before they both turned to look at Rachel, still being held by her father. She looked like crap. Actually, she looked worse. She looked.. worse than they had ever seen her.

Whoever had caused the woman they both loved too feel like this, they would find. And make him pay.

Rachel finally lifted her gaze to find that both Frank and Jack was staring at her. She tried to give them some kind of reassurance that she was okay, but she just couldn't.

She wasn't okay, far from it.

"Rachel," her father said, "do you want to sit down? You do not look too good."

"I just need a glass of water.."

"I'll be right back," her father promised.

She nodded weakly. As soon as her father had walked away a bit, Jonathon came up to her. She could see Frank and Jack frown at that. An urge to laugh hysterically came over her, but she managed to ignore it.

"You okay?" her ex asked her, and she wanted to punch his lights out for even asking that. It was just so.. him to say something like that.

"I just lost my son, Jonathon, what do you think!" she shot back at him.

"I lost a son too!" he yelled, "and it was your damn fault!"

She closed her eyes. It was true. It was her fault. If she hadn't.. If only.. her world started to spin.

"What the hell is wrong with you mate!" she heard Jack call out, but the world was growing white before her eyes. With a small sigh, she fell to the ground.

"Rach!" Frank and Jack called out at the same time, both running to her side, Frank with a hateful glare at Jonathon.

"Rach, Rach, talk to me, please?" Jack urged, checking her pulse and breathing.

"She's just passed out," he told Frank a second later, and they both breathed a sigh of relief.

Jonathon just snorted, and stalked off.

"That guy bugs me more than words can express!" Frank stated, loud enough for Jonathon to hear. It didn't cause the guy to turn around though, he just stalked on.

"Me too," Jack muttered.

"Hmmmm," Rachel muttered, and their attention turned to her again.

"Rach?"

"Yeah!"

"Can you get up?"

"Hmmm," she muttered, but did slowly get on her feet.

"What happened?" she asked.

"You passed out. Are you sure you're okay Rach?" Frank asked, his face mirroring the concern in his voice.

"Just tired.. Dad.." she said, as her father came to them, holding a glass of water.

"Yes, Rachel, let's go. Thank you both," he said to Frank and Jack. The two stood and looked after them, feeling helpless.

There was nothing they could do. Nothing.

II

And so it was over. The funeral, the wake. She had nothing to hold onto anymore.. except revenge. Payback to whoever had did it.

She had fallen, and no one could help her up again. There was just that one goal that kept her going, that one thought.

To find him, the killer, the one who had robbed her of her son, her light in the darkness of everyday life. She knew Frank and Jack wanted to help her, that they were practically falling over each other to reach her first, but she just couldn't let them in. Couldn't let them fall too.

So she left them at the wake.

They brought her home. To her house, which was no longer a crime scene. Officially at least.

A feeling of resignation passed over her. It was over. The center of her universe were no more. No more. .

"Rachel, are you sure you want to stay in your house?" her father asked again, and she gave him a brave smile.

"I cannot let the demons win," she replied, but didn't tell him the other reason she wanted to stay. She wanted to remember. She wanted the memories to drive her, to keep her going, for a while yet at least.

"You call it?" She nodded.

"He was a wonderful child," her father said gently, with tears in his eyes.

"He was," she replied, her voice cracking, and she quickly went inside, closing the door behind her. The urge to cry came over her again, but there was simply no tears left.

She hugged herself, leaning against the door. The house was totally quiet, and dark. She didn't mind. The darkness was a blessing. It allowed her to hide from herself, from the fact that she was alone here now. In the dark she could pretend.

Slowly, she got up, and walked into the living room. And there it was. The wall. She stared at it hatefully. It was the wall's fault.

"Damn you!" she cried, and punched at it. It did nothing but make her hand hurt, but she kept pounding at it, till the pain was overwhelming, stinging through her palms, her fingers, her wrist. Only then did she stop pounding, and fell onto the floor, gasping for breath.

She still couldn't cry, her eyes were too dry, but a large sob escaped her. She deserved it. She deserved to feel miserable for the rest of her life. He was dead. There was no reason to feel joy, no reason to feel anything but pain, pain overwhelming.

Without knowing it, she curled up in a fetus position. She just lay there, feeling her heart beat slowly. She wondered if she could make it stop beating on will, and if that would stop the hurting.

She needed to hear a voice, to hear something besides her own heartbeats. Almost on instinct, she reached for the phone, and dialed a number that was forever written into her mind.

He picked up on the third ring.

"Holloway."

"Frank!" she breathed.

"Rachel.. is something wrong?" his voice was filled with concern, and she could tell he was on the verge of dropping everything to run over to her house and make sure she was okay. A part of her wanted to let him, but she wouldn't allow him to see her like this, to be weak in front of him.

"You're such a fool," she told herself, for she knew Frank would always be there for her, weak or strong.

"No.. I just.. wanted to hear your voice," she said slowly.

"If you need anythingâ€|" he offered.

"I know Frank," she replied.

"I can come over, if ya likeâ€|"

"No," she cut in, "not tonight. I just wanna.. sleep right now." She doubted she would get any, but it seemed a plausible explanation.

"Okay.. get a good nights sleep, and call me tomorrow."

"I will," she promised.

"Goodnight then," he said reluctantly.

"Goodnight." Neither hung up, and just sat there, listening to him breath at the other end. It felt.. comforting.

"Goodnight," she said again, and hung up, returning to her fetus position.

And she lay there, on the floor, curled up, wishing he was there to hold her and tell her everything would be okay.

And he lay in his bed, wishing he could hold her and tell her everything would be okay.

The night fell.

II

Morning came.

She awoke on the floor, her muscles sore and stiff. She had eventually fallen asleep last night, but now she wished she hadn't. Every bone in her body hurt, and like hell too.

"Ouch!" she exclaimed, getting up. Her head hurt as well, she had a splitting headache.

"Damnit!" she cried out as she tripped over a bottle. With a sinking heart she realized it was a bottle from that night.

That night. And the memories found her again.

"_Mon, can I have a coke, please?"_

_ "Alright David, go get one in the refrigerator, okay?"_

_ "Thanks mom!"_

"David," she whispered, and looked at the bottle. Taking a deep breath, she marched into the kitchen with it, and threw it determined in the trash.

Time to take control. She paced the kitchen floor slowly. There was something her mind had been trying to tell her the last few days. Something important. Something..

Flash.

"_Jonathon?"_

_ "Rachel."_

_ "What's the matter? You look like hell."_

_ "It's just this case I dropped, I didn't want to, but.. Why the hell am I telling you?"_

_ "Sorry."_

_ "Involving cops would only make it worseâ€| Aaah, nevermind. You wanna pick up David tomorrow?"_

_ "Sure."_

Flash. She closed her eyes. That was it, that strange conversation she'd had with Jonathon the day before.. Before her world had been so crushed to pieces.

"What was that case?" she pondered. Only one way to find out.

She had to go snooping. It was time to find who did it.

II

The courthouse seemed as good a place as any to start.

As she approached it, she considered who to ask. One of the prosecutors, definitely. Maybe Julia, or Jaye, if they were there. They owned her quite a few favors. Or possibly Vanessaâ€| There were plenty of people she could ask, she just had to make sure Jonathondidn't hear about it. He wouldn't be happy. He had convinced himself David was killed because of her. If he hadâ€| She didn't think she could live with that.

And there was only one way to find out.

As she pulled up in front of the court house, she noticed a green Mazda parked illegally. She shook her head slightly, perfect place to park illegally indeed!

She hurried up the well-known stairs, and when she got inside, she scanned the hallway for any known faces. Luckily, she spotted Julia just a few meters away.

"Hey Julia!" she called out, and the tall, blonde woman turned to her.

"Rachel! Hey!"

"Long time no see! Life good for ya?"

"Yeah, yeah not too bad."

"Any interesting cases lately?"

"Same old, same old really, doing my best to lock the baddies away. You?"

Rachel suddenly found that her eyes were filling with tears. She blinked them away, willed herself to be strong.

"David's.. dead."

"Oh my God, Rach, I'm so sorry. I didn't know. I guess that's why your ex bit my head off this morning."

"Yeah.. speaking of which, do you remember a case he handled, and then suddenly dropped about a month ago?"

"Rings a bell.. I think Vanessa was the prosecutor. A drug case, I think."

"Do you know why he dropped it?"

"No.. there was some rumors.. about bribing.. but nothing concrete?"

"You know where Vanessa is?"

"Out of town these days. I'll tell her to give you a call though."

"Thanks."

"And listen Rach.. I'm so sorry."

"Yeah, I know," she replied, and walked off, Julia looking worried after her.

Tears were threatening to overcome her now, and she fought hard to keep them at bay. So she didn't see the two detectives until she bumped into them.

"Detective Goldstein," Webster greeted .

"Fancy finding you here," Adams added.

"It's such a big city too," Webster pointed out, "so you wouldn't be here looking into your ex-husband, now would you?"

She just stared at them blankly.

"Because, if you are, I'm giving you a friendly warning. Stay away. You're too close, you're not thinking rationally. Let us handle it."

"Was that all?" she asked dully.

"Don't make us take this to your superior," Webster insisted.

"Which we might just do," Adams added, getting a hard look from his partner.

"Whatever," she stated, turning away from the two. She knew she should assure them she wasn't looking into the case, trouble would

come from this she was sure, but right now she didn't care.

She made it as far as the car before the tears came. She damned Webster and Adams for seeing it, and herself for being so weak.

She had to be strong. And she knew where she had to go. Face the demons.

2. Part Two

II

The cemetery. She drove around in circles for ages before she finally pulled up. Postponing it as long as she could. She didn't want to go there, didn't want to see the final confirmation. It would be.. an end of sorts. And she wasn't sure she wanted to let go.

She sat in the car for quite a while, making no move toward the door, just staring at the green grass, the blue sky and her trembling hands.

"You can do this," she told herself firmly, and opened the door, stepping carefully on the grass. Slowly, slowly, she walked towards where she knew the grave was, dreading every step closer, trying to walk as slowly as possible. Nevertheless, soon she was standing in front of it. The grave. David's grave.

The urge to run away was overwhelming, but she fought hard to keep standing still, but with her gaze on the sky.

"You 're in control. You're in control," she reminded herself, then finally let her gaze wander down. And there it was. The gravestone, covered with flowers.

The stone itself were beautiful, it had been a good choice, she had to admit. Jonathon had picked it, but she hadn't fought him on it.

And then it was his name. On the gravestone. David Goldstein.

It stabbed through her heart like an arrow. His name. His damn name!

She turned around and ran, ran like the wind to the car, started it up and drove away.

She couldn't face it. Not yet, if ever. She just couldn't. Couldn't!

II

Frank was leaning against the door as she pulled up in front of the house.

"What are you doing here!" she called out as she slammed the car door shut.

"I thought you were going to call me today," he accused, looking at her intently, trying to see if she had cried. Her eyes did seem

swollen.

"Aw shit, I'm sorry, I meant to, really," she excused herself as she pushed open the door and went past him.

"Where have you been?" he asked, still standing in the doorway, leaning against the frame.

"What, are you my babysitter or something?" He met her glare.

"Or something," he replied.

"Want a beer?" she asked resigned.

"Yeah," he said, walking in and closing the door after him. "So when are you coming back to work?"

"I dunno Frank," she replied honestly, handing him a beer from the refrigerator. "I just don't knowâ€|"

He nodded, and she picked up a beer as well before they both headed into the living room, popping down on the couch. They sat in silence for a while, drinking the beer, but it wasn't an uncomfortable silence. It felt good to just hear his breathing, reminding her she wasn't alone.

"How are you doing?" he probed gently after a while.

"Like crap," she replied honestly.

"It will get better," he promised.

"A part of me doesn't want it to get better. Like, if it gets better, I'm betraying David."

"He wouldn't want you to knock yourself up over it. He wouldn't want you to feel like this," Frank said with conviction. She nodded slowly, knowing he was right. It was her who wanted her to feel like this.

"And there's the house. It keeps reminding me. It keepsâ€|It's like the house.. talks to me," she explained, or tried to anyway. He shot a glare at her, and seemed to understand.

"Ya can always move in with meâ€|" he offered, and she snickered.

"Seriously, you could," he insisted, "and it wouldn't be like that or anything."

"Like what Frank?"

"Umm.. ya know, thatâ€|" he trailed off.

"I don't think it's such a good ideaâ€|"

"I'll keep the offer open," he said gently, not wanting to push her. She nodded, then eased herself back onto the couch. She still hadn't touched her coffee.

"Any progress on the case?" she suddenly asked.

"Umm.. what case?" he asked uncomfortably.

"Don't play dumb with me, Francis. I know you and Jack have been making inquiries."

"Wellâ€| we thought.. I thought.. that it be best not toâ€|. " he said hesitantly, and she bolted up from the couch, glaring at him.

"Don't Frank!" she warned.

"Don't what?" he asked confused.

"Don't treat me like a baby!"

"I wasn't, I was justâ€|" he tried to explain, but she wouldn't let him finish.

"I don't need you trying to protect me! I don't need you!" she cried out, and he froze. If she had stabbed him right in the heart she couldn't have done a better job of hurting him. The look of hurt that flashed across his face was heartbreaking, but there was no part of her heart left to break. A part of her screamed at her to take it back, but the words just wouldn't come out of her mouth.

"Fine," he said, "I'll just be on my way then, since you don't need me." He waited a second, but when she made no move to stop him , he got up and walked out of the room.

Seconds later she heard the door slam shut after him.

II

And the she was alone.

The house was so quiet, so very quiet.. except for the whispers. They came from the walls, and invaded her mind, filling it with memories, with images.

She closed her eyes to shut it out, but that only made the images stronger, more vivid. Alive. Quickly, she opened her eyes again, only to find she was looking at the wall.

The Wall. The wall that David had been thrown up against as the shooter had fired, and the scream echoed through her head once more.

It was getting hard to breathe, as if the walls around her was trying to choke her. Squeeze the life out of her. Why should she live when he did not? It wasn't fair.

If only.. she hadn't made that oven-baked stake that night.

>If only.. it had been done just a few minutes earlier.
If only.. she had gone to check out David's claim right away.

>If only.. the shooter had shot her instead.
If only.. if only.. if only..

"If only!" she cried out, then hid her head in her hands. If only.. David had lived.

"But he didn't," the house whispered, "he didn't. He's dead. He's deeeee-ad!"

"Shut up!" she yelled, throwing a cup at the wall. It broke into a thousand pieces, just as her life had.

She couldn't stay here.

Without even realizing what she was doing, she began packing, stuffing clothes into her bags. She had to get away, she couldn't live here, where the memories were vivid and so alive.

She just couldn't. Finally her bags were full, and she turned the lights off, closing her ears from the insistent whispers. Quickly locking the door behind her, she almost ran to the car, threw the stuff in and drove off. To where, she wasn't really sure, she debated several options in her head, when she suddenly realized she had instinctively driven to the only place she could go.

His place.

II

Frank was on his third beer of the evening. He had no intentions of getting himself drunk or anything, but it felt a bit comforting drinking, as if she would join him anytime. As if she hadn't said..

There was a knock on the door. Sighing, he got up, placing the beer bottle on the table, and headed for the door.

"Yeah, yeah, YEAH!" he said as someone knocked impatiently again. He almost ripped the door from its hinges as he tore it open. And there stood Rachel.. with bags. He stared.

"That offer still good?" she asked quietly.

"Yeah.. Yeah, of course.. Ummm.. come in!" he said, grabbing a bag for her. She took the two others.. and he realized she had packed enough to stay quite some time. His heart skipped several beats as he followed her into the kitchen.

"I justâ€|"

"Yeah," he replied, "I have some food.. or we could go outâ€|"

"It's okay Frank," she said, dropping the bags on the kitchen floor, "Ya don't hafta go to any troubleâ€|"

"It's no trouble," he insisted, and she gave him a quick smile, but shook her head.

"I'm just tired right now Frankâ€|" she said, and she did look tired. Her eyes seemed to be distant, her face was pale, but she did look better than she had last night. Her cheeks were streaked from crying, he could tell, but she didn't seem on the verge of tears.

"Of course. I'll make your bed.. Just help yourself to any beers in the meantime okay?" and with that he practically flew up the stairs,

afraid that if he left her alone for too long she would change her mind. He still couldn't believe she had actually accepted his offer, but he wasn't about to ruin it by asking why. She needed him, end of story.

He had never made a bed so fast in his whole life. He half thought she would be gone when he re-entered the kitchen, but she still sat there, holding a bottle of beer, but it was still unopened.

"Your bed is done," he exclaimed, and she looked up at him with a warm smile, but the warmth never touched her eyes. He had to fight an urge to wrap her in his arms and hold her forever, making sure no one hurt her again. She would probably deck him for thinking like that. Instead he forced himself to keep a little distance. She had to come to him.

"Thanks," she replied, and made no effort to hide a yawn. "I think I'll go to bed now." "

"Yeah, it's all ready, and ya can unpack tomorrow.. How long are you staying?" he tried to keep his voice even, but a bit of nervousness sneaked into it nevertheless.

"Please let it be more than one night!" his mind begged.

"How long is the offer open?" she asked back, and he shrugged his shoulders.

"Indefinitely, I reckon."

"Yeah, maybe I'll stay that long then," she replied, the bit her lip. For a whole second he thought she would take it back, then she just closed her eyes and almost fell over.

He caught her before she fell, and when she opened her eyes again, he could see pure exhaustion.

"Thanks," she muttered, and let herself be lead upstairs. She fell onto the made-up couch, not even bothering to take her shoes off. Seconds later he could tell she was asleep due to her steady breathing.

He gently eased her shoes off her, then wrapped the blanket affectionately around her. She shifted a bit, but didn't wake up. He lifted a strand of hair that had fallen across her cheek into place, then kissed her gently on the forehead.

"Goodnight," he whispered, and wished her a long, dreamless sleep. One without nightmares, though he doubted it was possible. Then he carefully tip-toed out, and closed the door behind him.

A tiny smile emerged on his face. He had always wanted Rach to spend the night at his house.. and now she was. And what was more important.. by coming to him she had admitted something he had always wanted to hear.

I need you.

For some reason he couldn't quite fathom, he needed to hear that more than anything else.

II

She awoke to the smell of breakfast. It filled her senses pleasantly, and for a whole minute she just lay there, basking in the feeling.

And then the memories returned. She managed to not cry this morning, probably because Frank was downstairs. She could hear the noises he made, taking something out of a cabinet, answering the phone, and walk around. It felt oddly comforting just hearing him like that.

Finally she heard him walk up the stairs, and knock on the door.

"I'm awake," she called out.

"Can I tempt you with a fabulous breakfast downstairs?"

"Did you make it?" she asked, and she could almost see his expression through the door.

"I can cook," he insisted, and she smiled slightly. He could cook, actually, but she wasn't about to admit that.

"I'll take the chance," she replied, "I'll be downstairs in a sec."

"Need any help in there?" he teased, and waited for the expected "Holloway!"

"Holloway!" she called out, "you're such a!"

"Good cook, yes, I know," he said with a small chuckle, and went downstairs. And to her surprise, she felt almost good as she got up. She even caught herself smiling a bit.

She walked downstairs only a few minutes later, just as Frank was putting glasses on the table.

"Perfect timing," he smiled. Astounded, she looked around. The kitchen was clean. It still smelled of washing, a kind of fresh, clean smell. And things were in place.

"You cleaned!" she exclaimed, and he shrugged his shoulders.

"I might have tidied up a bit!"

She shot a quick look into the living room, and to her astonishment, that looked cleaned too. She turned to Frank, who practically beamed with pride.

"I'm impressed Francis," she remarked.

"You should be, it took me half the night!" he replied, then turned to the kitchen table.

"Breakfast is served!"

And to the astonishment of both, she laughed. Not loudly, but it was an honest laugh, one like the ones she would laugh before tragedy had struck.

And all the trouble had had went to, had been worth it.

II

As he entered the Station later that morning, he were met with a chorus of how-is-she's. He dodged as many as them as he could with "As well as can be expected", but when he found himself face to face with Jack, he decided to be a bit more explicit. If only to rub it in.

"So she's staying at your place now?" Jack asked, in hearing range of Helen, Tayler and Tommy. Several eyebrows were raised, as well as some giggles.

"Yeah.." he replied, then headed for the stairs, away from the far too nosy colleagues. It wasn't like they would start any rumors, the rumors were already there, but if Rach found out he'd been declaring that she was staying at his place across half the stationâ€ Well, he didn't really wanna think about what she'd do.

"She's eating well, and I think she had a decent nights sleep," he told Jack, as they walked up to the office.

"She's better then?"

"I think it was good for her, ya know, to get away from the house. Too much memories."

"Yeah," Jack agreed, not adding where he wished she had gone to stay instead. Frank's look told him that the guy knew though.

"She'll probably stay a while," Frank added, unable to resist pushing the point home. Jack shot him a glare, and almost bumped into Jeff because of it.

"Just the two I were looking for," Hawker exclaimed.

"She's doing better," Frank said, sensing the question before it was asked.

"Good, good," Jeff said, "and you two have visitors."

"Visitors?" Jack asked.

"Yes, Detectives Webster and Adams. You know, the Detectives handling the case." Jeff's gaze was practically drilling hole in Frank and Jack, and they both shifted a bit.

"Really? They say what they want?" Frank asked innocently.

"No, but I have a fair idea. I told you this before, and I'm telling you again. Stay out of this case!"

"Wouldn't dream of touching it," Frank replied, still innocently.

"If I hear otherwise Hollowayâ€|. "

"Why would you? I said we wouldn't even dream of touching it."

Hawker stared at him, trying to decide if he was honest or not. It could be hard to tell with Frank sometimes.

"Don't let your visitors wait," he finally said, leaving the pair. There was something oddly uncomfortable about the way Jack and Frank were acting lately.. like they had some big common goal.

"So what do we owe the pleasure of this visit?" Frank exclaimed as he entered his office where Webster and Adams were standing. They did not look happy.

"Didn't we tell you last time?"

"I don't know, did you?" Jack replied to Adams.

"We warned you to stay off the case," Webster reminded him.

"Did they Frank?" Jack asked.

"If they say so," Frank replied.

"Don't play games with us. WE handle this case. And tell that to your partner too."

"Huh?"

"Detective Goldstein. She is far too close to this."

"Rachel!" they both asked surprised.

"Yes, Rachel Goldstein," Webster replied, "if we catch her snooping around one more time.. We'll get her suspended."

And with that they both marched out.

"Did you know she had beenâ€|" Jack asked, and Frank only shook his head.

"Damn," he cursed, "bloody stubbornâ€|"

"Yeah, she is quite stubborn," Jack added. Frank popped down on his chair, muttering a few things under his breath.

"I'm gonna have a chat with her.. Damn, if Jeff finds out she has even LOOKED at thisâ€|"

"Yeah, I know," Jack replied, "just how good an eye have you been keeping on her?"

"Not good enough, apparently," he noted sourly, wondering how the hell she had managed to snoop around without him noticing it. Bloody hell, she was too smart for her own good.

"Well, I found out something about the jeep?" Jack stated when Frank seemed to drift into deep thoughts.

"Yeah?"

"It was reported stolen earlier that day.. but look at the owners address." Frank leaned over the desk to glance at the report.

"What.. Hang on.. That's just down the block from where Jonathon lives!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," Jack confirmed.

"So this guy.. has a fight with Jonathon.. thinks he wants to get back at himâ€| nabs the car.. heads home to pick up the gun and the disguise.. and heads for Rachel's place," Frank wondered aloud.

"Yes, but he must have known where David was for your scenery to work."

"So it's someone who knows Jonathon pretty well, you reckon."

"Must be.. maybe a good client.. if we ask around a bit in the neighborhood, maybe someone remembers any visitors to his place."

"Worth checking out," Frank stated.

"I'll do it.. you keep up a front for Jeff," Jack suggested, heading for the door.

"Righto," Frank said, most to himself. He found himself reaching into a drawer.. and pull out a picture. It was off David and Rachel, both smiling. He didn't know why she had given him that, but he had kept it in his drawers since forever. It was such a good picture.. she was totally relaxed, beaming at the camera.

He silently wondered if she's ever beam like that again.. sure, she could get over it, but getting over it wasn't the same as leaving it behind.

He wanted her to beam like that again. Preferably at him, of course. He touched the picture gently.

"I miss you too David," he whispered. He'd been so busy looking after Rachel, and feeling for her, he hadn't realized he missed the little bugger himself. He had so much of Rachel in him. And it wasn't really his fault his dad was such a bastard.

"You didn't deserve that bastard for a father," he remarked, "but your mother.. she's amazing. I'll take good care of her, I promise. I won't let her destroy herself over this.. You wouldn't want her to, I think."

He looked at the picture again.

"No, you wouldn't, you loved her," he said confidently.

"Talking to yourself Holloway?" said Jeff as he entered. Frank practically jumped out of his skin.

"Umm, no, I was justâ€|"

"Where did ya hide Christey?"

"He felt like heading homeâ€|" Frank lied as innocently as he could.

"Shouldn't you? It's getting late."

"If you say so Jeff," Frank replied, smiling slightly at the thought of who waited at home.

"And give my regards to Rachel, I hear she's staying at your place." Frank froze halfway through the doorway, and turned to look at his boss. The expression was completely neutral, he couldn't read it either way.

"Sure," he replied and headed out. Jeff looked after him, and shook his head slightly. Those two living together.. Now that was something he'd like to see.

II

"Rach?" he called as he entered the house, looking around. There was no reply.

"Rachel?" he called again, peaking into the kitchen. It was empty. So was the living room, the bathroom, the bedroomâ€| She was nowhere to be found.

"Damnit!" he called, where the hell was she? Probably doing something very stupid, he just knew it. It would be so her to go behind his back. Finally he heard the door open.

"Where the hell have you been!" he shot at her, as soon as she entered the kitchen, carrying several plastic bags.

"I went to get us some food.. your fridge ain't exactly full," she replied, putting the bags on the counter. He didn't let that fact lure him.

"You've been snooping around on the case!" he yelled. She stared at him.

"I have not!" she shot back

"You were too snooping around!"

"Were not!"

"Were too!" he stated, "Damnit Rach, don't lie to me! I think I deserve to get the truth from you!"

"Fine!" she snapped, "so I have been looking around a little. He killed my son!"

"That's exactly why you shouldn't be snooping around.. If Jeff found outâ€|. "

"To Hell with that! I want to find this guy!" she yelled.

"You're too close, Rach," he insisted.

"And you're not!" she shot back.

"Let me and Jack handleâ€|" he began.

"You and Jack!" she snapped.

"Yeah, wellâ€|"

"I thought you two couldn't stand each other," she noted.

"We don't, but.. ya know, common goals and such.."

"And that common goal is me!"

"We're worried about ya Rach.." he offered, trying to calm her down. It didn't work too well.

"What the hell gives you the right to act like my.. babysitter!" she spat.

"I don't.. But I'm not about to let you ruin your life!" he shot back, anger rising. They were both breathing hard as their gazes locked, and the anger seemed to make something else resurface.

"Damn you Frank! Damn you! DAMN YOU!" she cried out, staring at him widely. Then she kissed him.

He almost fell backwards with surprise. It was hardly how he'd pictured a first kiss. But then again, he wasn't about to turn it down! For the feeling of her lips on his were more vivid than any daydream. He could taste traces of tears still on her lips, and he kissed them away, kissed her pain away. For a first kiss it felt oddly familiar, as if he had a distant memory of it. As if he's kissed her in a former life. Or maybe when he'd been insanely drunk.

She was practically assaulting his mouth, the fire of anger turned into the fire of passion. And a part of her knew she was trying to quell the grief with something greater, but for the first time in weeks her heart didn't feel like it would explode with pain.

He brought his hands to her back, to trace her spine, going slowly up and down while feeling her body respond to his. He let his hands slip under her shirt, to feel the bare skin of her back against his hands. She responded by pushing him against the counter with a strength that surprised him.

He could feel something cutting into his side, but he couldn't be bothered to find out what it was. Instead he concentrated on the feeling of her. Every detail got memorized, how she made small moan when he traced a special part of her mouth, how she let her hands rub against his chest, then moved to his neck.

He moved his hands to rest on her belly, feeling her warm flesh, so very sensitive under his hands. She broke off a little to look up at him.

"How.. about.. weâ€¦ take this.. to the bedroom?" she asked between kisses.

"Are you.. sure?". The last word came out a bit strained when she practically assaulted his neck.

"I'll.. take that.. as a yes.." he muttered, as she wandered down.

He closed his eyes. How long was he supposed to withstand this sweet torture? A part of him wanted to push her over the counter, but that wouldn't really be fair to her. And he wanted to be fair. Hell, he wanted to give her the most incredible night of her life, and that weren't going to happen if he gave in too soon.

"Focus, Holloway, FOCUS!" he told himself firmly.

He managed to focus long enough to lead her up the stairs. The strangeness of the situation hit him. He'd taken many women this way before.. But this was Rachel.. And this could be more than just one night.

He banged the door open, walking in backwards, never letting go of her eyes. Her gaze didn't falter, not once. She wanted it as much as he, he realized.

The air was sparkling with energy around them. They were crossing a line. And once it was crossed, they could go back, but it would never be the same.

She stopped halfway across the room, and drew him into another kiss. A part of her felt guilty for trying to shut David out this way, but a part of her realized she needed this. It scared her how much she wanted it, it scared her that it would mean more than just a night of comfort, and it scared her that it was Frank.. Frank. From now on it would be her Frank more than ever. So she tucked away the fears into the darkest corner of her mind, and shut their muttering out. She needed this.

And she closed her eyes and let herself drown in the feeling of him.

II

They awoke to the sound of rain against the roof. Their bodies still tangled in each other, warm still from the night's activities. She didn't pull away, he noted.

"Hey," he smiled.

"Heyâ€¦" she replied, letting him clasp her hand in his.

She bit her bottom lip, searching for something to say, but when she looked into his eyes, she was lost.

"Frankâ€¦." she began.

He felt his heart fall several pegs. Here it came, surely. The dreaded "it-was-a-mistake-let's-forget-about-last-night" line. He had

kinda hoped it wouldn't come. And to his amazement, it didn't. Instead she just curled up to him, resting her head on his chest.

"Just hold me," she finished.

If he could have exploded with happiness, that would have been the moment.

So he held her as close as he could, basking in the feeling. And they lay there, silently, listening to the rain.

II

It was Saturday morning, and it rained. The thing about rain, is that sometimes it is easier to see in the rain than in the daylight. The rain seems to pause everything, creating a moment of peace.

Frank Holloway and Rachel Goldstein had such a moment that Saturday morning.

The rain shut everything else out, the world, the worries, the heartbreaks. It was just them, holding each other. For a moment everything was perfect.

Unfortunately, all moments pass, and the best moments are the once who passes too soon.

"What should we do Frank?" she asked after a while.

"We can't go back."

"No, we can't. Butâ€œ I'm not ready to loose you as my partner."

"We can keep it a secret," he suggested.

"A secret.. Do you think we can?" she asked

"We can try," he said simply.

"We tell no one," she empathized.

"No one," he agreed.

"And you stop acting like my mom," she added, tapping him on the nose.

"As your boyfriend then?"

"As my secret boyfriend," she replied, giving him a quick kiss on the cheek. He grinned slightly, letting a hand trace her arm from shoulder to fingers, slowly, gently.

"What about Jack?" he suddenly asked.

"What about him?"

"Shouldn't we tell him something? I mean, heâ€œ "

"Leave that to me," she said sharply, the added more gently. "I

should be the one to tell him after all. I mean.. he and I should tell him."

He nodded, then let his lips do the same wandering his hand had. She found it hard to concentrate on their conversation, but she had a few things more to say.

"Frank.. what I said yesterday.. I meant it. I want to find that guy. I hafta. I just hafta."

He paused his wandering at her elbow, lifting his head to look her in the eyes. She was speaking the truth, he could tell. She wouldn't be able to rest until, someway or another, this case was resolved.

"We do it together," he said, "if you try and head out on your own, I swear I'll lock you in my room."

"Together," she agreed, "and if ya tried such a thing, Holloway, I'd lock you into a dark cellar and throw away the key!"

He chuckled, then looked at her seriously.

"Umm.. we like.. didn't talk about this last nightâ€| and since we didn't use anyâ€| umm.. protectives.. What I mean is, if you get pregnant, ya know, I don't mind."

"You don't mind?" she asked incredulously.

"I mean.. you're great mom and.. you should have a kid."

"It won't replace David!" she shot back, desperately.

"No, I didn't mean it like that.. I just meant.. I mean.. babies.. we could do it allâ€|If you want to."

He felt her stiffen a bit below him, and figured he better quickly change the subject.

"Breakfast?" he asked.

"Yeah, I'm starved," she replied.

"After last nightâ€|so am I."

II

She went with him to the Station. It was time, she figured.

Compassionate looks followed her everywhere, a few careful "how are you doing?" as well, but no one seemed to want to push her. Maybe because Frank was practically hovering over her the whole time, giving warning glances if anyone pushed the conversation too far.

She found it more than a little annoying.

"Frank, what did I say about you not being my babysitter?" she exclaimed as they entered their office.

"Ummm.. that I wasn't," he offered.

"So what was that?"

"Ummmmâ€| support fromâ€|" he glanced around, seeing no one was in hearing range, "your secret boyfriend?"

"Francis.."

"Yeah, yeah, I'll try and behave!" he replied as Jack entered.

"Rachel!"

"Heya Jack!" she smiled.

"Okay, stop the jealousy thing already Holloway," Frank told himself, finding he disliked Rachel smiling that broadly to Jack. He had no reason to be jealous. Not really. She was staying at his place, sleeping in his bed..

"Back to work?" Jack asked.

"For the time being," she replied, "and I'd like to know what the hell you two have been doing!"

Jack shot a questionable look at Frank, who just shrugged his shoulders slightly.

"Umm.. nothing."

"Don't give me that Jack, I'veâ€|"

"Well, Webster and Adams told me you had been snooping around!" Jack shot back.

Frank leaned back in his chair and smirked.

"And you and Frank haven't!"

"Then why aren't you yelling at him?"

"I did last night," she replied, and felt a blush beginning to crawl up her cheeks. They had been doing a lot last night. To hide it she turned around and stared at Frank.

"What are you smirking for?"

"Nuthin," he said innocently.

"Right," she replied, and turned to Jack again.

"Now what have you two monkeys dug up?"

"We think the target was Jonathon, not you," Frank shot in, taking some of the heat off poor Jack.

She considered that for a moment.

"So we've been digging into his business," Jack continued, "and we've

discovered that jeep the guy was driving got stolen from a house just down the block from where Jonathon lives. It has to be more than a coincident."

She nodded slowly.

"Jonathon dropped a case about a month ago," she said after a while, "he was defending 3 guys accused of drug smuggling. He was winning it, really. Then suddenly he dropped the case, they get a mistrial, the case should come up again in a few weeks. I met Jonathon at the court house the other day, and he mentioned the case. It wasn't like him at all. He looked very disturbed. We didn't really talk, but I could see there was something troubling him. I asked, but he just cut me off, saying something about 'involving cops would only make it worse'. I remembered the conversation the other day. My gut feeling tells me it's tied to this."

"Why didn't you tell me this last night?" Frank cut in, ignoring the glance Jack sent him.

She shook her head absetmindly.

"I wasn't sure. But after hearing this.. There has to be a connection."

"I don't suppose Jonathon will be too willing to talk to us," Frank remarked.

"Not with the way you two have been acting around him."

Both looked down, a little guilty.

"He is a bastard," Frank defended himself with.

"Yeah," Jack agreed.

She stared at them. She didn't know what was more worrying, Frank and Jack going at each other, or Frank and Jack agreeing on more than one thing.

"How about I try digging up the file on that case?" Jack offered. They both nodded, lost in a trail of thoughts.

"Be back before you know it," he exclaimed, and disappeared out the door.

Frank lifted his gaze from the desk to Rachel, who was obviously thinking about that night again. He could tell from the way she was wincing occasionally.

He wondered if he should ask her now. Just ask her. She wasn't much of a romantic, so if he made a big deal out of it, he might scare her away. Better to just ask, casually.

Right now.

But the words wouldn't come out of his mouth. Perhaps it was better to wait a bit. Till the worst part of the grieving was done. She had enough on her mind already, and he didn't want to add to her worries.

And it had to be asked at the right moment, so he could get a 'yes' out of her. That was the only acceptable answer, after all. And if he did get that answer..

"What the mink are you staring at?" she shot at him, and he realized he'd been staring quite obviously.

"Sorry," he muttered. It was best to wait. She clearly wasn't in the right mood now. Timing.

Yes, timing was important with that kind of question.

II

Jack returned to the office an hour later, having gotten "lunch" he claimed. Lunch was no less than two stacked files, that Frank quickly sneaked into his bag when Helen entered the office.

"How'y doing?" she asked Rachel.

"Well, ya know.. it's hard," Rachel admitted.

"Sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but it's about to get harder."

They looked at her questionably.

"Webster and Webster were just in talking to Hawker, and your name came up more than once."

"Aw crap!" Rachel exclaimed, "I met them at the courthouse, and I guess they decided to tell Jeff."

Frank sighed.

"Great," he muttered.

"Jack, there's a woman looking for you downstairs."

"I better go.. You twoâ€|"

"We can handle it," Frank assured him. Frankly, he wasn't sure if they really could, but there was no need to drag Jack into it too.

To his horror he realized he was actually beginning to like the guy.

"C ya Jack," he called out as Jack left the office, and Rachel shot him one of those looks. He ignored it completely.

Helen was staring too.

"What!" he asked.

"Nothing, you justâ€|" Helen began, but a voice droning from Jeff's office interrupted her.

"GOLDSTEIN, my office, NOW!"

"Good luck!" Helen shot at them, and was gone.

"Shit!" Rachel exclaimed.

"I'll go with ya," Frank said, getting up as she did.

"Frank, you don't have to!"

"Together," he reminded her, and after only a seconds hesitation, she nodded.

"What's up Jeff?" she asked as they entered his office. He didn't look happy. In fact, he looked like a storm heading their way.

"I've been lenient with ya Rachel, because of.. well, everything. But I can't let you do this."

"Do what?"

"Go on some hunt for revenge."

"I am not..." she began, but he got her short.

"Detectives Webster and Adams tell me you've been investigating a bit on your own. Rachel, I can't allow!"

"I can't let this go Jeff!" she yelled.

"I can't let you do this!" he yelled back.

"Fine!" she replied, "what are you gonna do, take my badge!"

He said nothing. She stared at him, then banged her badge and gun on the desk.

"Then take it!" she exclaimed.

"Rachel!" he began, but she cut him short.

"Take it!"

"I don't want to!" He met her gaze, and saw her determination, her anger. Nothing he could say would change it. Better to cut her loose, and hope Frank would be able to help her.

She stared at him for a moment more, then she left the room. A second later Frank's shield and gun banged onto the desk.

"Frank!"

"You take hers, you take mine."

"Listen Frank, you can't!" But Frank was already out the door, following Rachel, slamming the door behind them.

As he caught up with her outside the parking lot, she shot him a glare.

"You shouldn't have, Frank. Don't!"

"No," he interrupted, "don't tell me don't. We're a team Rach.. and I'm here for life."

She stopped to look up at him. He smiled down at her, affectionately. It suddenly hit her how she couldn't imagine her world without him in. He was a pillar she rested upon, never falling out below here. When her world fell to pieces, he had been there to pick it up and help her glue it back together.

"Frank.. I don't think I've told you.. how much you mean to me," she began hesitantly.

"Not in so many words," he agreed, "but every time I looked in your eyes.. I just knew."

"Like this," she asked, and looked him deeply in the eyes.

"Yeahâ€|" he replied, "and when you kissed meâ€|"

"Like thisâ€|" she said, and leaned forward to meet his lips, not caring that the whole Station probably saw it. Hell, the rumors were already flying, why not give them something to really talk about!

His lips were warm, comforting, and she let herself open up to that feeling so much she forgot where they were.

It wasn't until they broke off, she saw Jack standing a few meters away. His face was unreadable, totally blank.

"I'll just be a sec," she said to Frank, gesturing to Jack. He nodded, then leaned down to whisper in her ear.

"Be gentle with him.. but don't tell him I said that." She looked amazed after him, as he walked away a bit, giving them space.

"Rachel," Jack greeted and she lifted her gaze from Frank to him.

"Heya Jackâ€|. Listen, I'veâ€|"

"Don't," he interrupted, "I know what I saw, and that paints a picture I'm not in."

She closed her eyes. She didn't want to hurt his feelings.. but on the other hand she couldn't play this game anymore. It wasn't fair to Frank.

"I'm sorry Jackâ€|" she said, honestly, "butâ€|"

"You and Frank, yes, I know," he replied.

She nodded slowly.

"I'm sorry," she once again offered, "and I should get goingâ€|"

"Well, good luck to ya," he replied, and she gave him half a smile as

she turned and walked away. And he stood there, looking at them as they walked away from him, a terrible, terrible sense of loss filling him.

3. Part Three

"So Jonathon were involved in this smuggling business, you reckon?" she asked as they looked at the files scattered all over the kitchen table.

"He defended these guys, but then he suddenly handed the case over to someone else. It doesn't make sense. It's not something he would do. Once he gets into a case, he doesn't just let go, especially when he has a fair chance of winning. At least that's my impression of him."

"Yeah.. I think you're right on that. So ya think he discovered the guys was guilty?"

"It has to be more than that, I mean, lawyers, they don't really care about that."

She considered that for a moment, then gave him a nod, and dived back into the files.

"Helen know that we're 'borrowing' these?" she asked after a while.

"Helen had to go out for coffee just then," he grinned, "officially at least."

"Officially," she repeated, sending Helen a silent thanks.

"I hafta find a way to sneak them back in tomorrow though, without Jeff taking my head off."

"Such a pretty head too," she remarked. He looked up from the file to give her a quick grin.

"This is interesting... Apparently, the neighbors complained that there were some trouble outside your ex's house. When a police officer came to check it out, both your ex and the other guy said it was just a disagreement."

"What was the other guy's name?" she asked, leaning over to peak at what he was reading.

"Umm... Carl Anderson."

"That rings a bell," she said slowly, trying to connect the dots.

"It should.. that's one of the guy's which case he dropped," Frank stated, and their eyes met. It wasn't like the last piece of the puzzle felt in place.. it was more like they finally saw the puzzle.

"Carl Anderson," she said, and to Frank, it sounded like a death sentence.

"Hang on," he interrupted, "we don't know if he's connected to this yet."

She gave him a look that told him quite the opposite. "I know he is," she replied, "I know it. He has something to do with is."

Her jaw was set, he could almost sense the unspoken "he'll pay" in the air. Bringing Rach into his and Jack's investigation might not have been such a great idea.. but if he hadn't, he knew she'd gone out on her own, and that would have been worse. At least now he could keep an eye on her. Picking up the phone, he started dialing.

"Who are you calling?"

"Someone who can dig something up on this Carl Anderson guy," he replied, "yeah, Jack, it's Frank."

"Jack?" she mouthed, but he just winked at her. "Listen, we need some info on a Carl Anderson.. yeah... yes.. yeah, I know.. uh huh.. okay, tomorrow morning, breakfast.. yeah, got it...c ya mate!"

"Mate? Breakfast? JACK!" she asked incredulously. He shrugged his shoulders.

"He's not that half bad.."

"Frank.. we're talking about Jack here, remember? The guy you used to refer to what's-his-name."

"Yeah, Jack," he replied, and she stared at him like snakes were growing out of his head.

"Anyway, he's gonna dig up stuff on this Anderson guy till tomorrow, and I'll meet him for breakfast, so you can sleep in," he said, when she kept staring.

"Francis James Holloway!"

"What?" he said innocently. She just kept staring at him.

"You're not.. liking him, are you?" she asked.

"Why, you jealous?" he teased.

"I just didn't think you and Jack.. hit it off very well, that's all."

"He's not half bad," Frank repeated, "now, I don't think there's much more we can do tonight... Bedtime?"

"You have only one thing on your mind, Holloway," she snorted.

"Actually, two things. You and bed. Preferably in the same sentence." He leaned forward to meet her lips, but she stopped him with a hand.

"Now, on one condition... You tell me exactly what you and Jack have been up tomorrow morning." He nodded, and she removed her hand, then

met his lips. And for the time being, she let the demons in her head get a rest.

II

"Come on Rach, how long are you going to be in the shower? You're using up all the hot water!" Frank complained, checking the time for the hundredth time that morning. At this rate, they would be late for the meeting. That wouldn't please Jack too much, he knew.

"I'm coming, I'm coming!" came her voice through the door, "Geez.. we could always share the water!"

"Too distracting," he replied, chuckling a bit. In fact, just the thought was distracting.. her in hot running water, and him... He forcefully shoved the thought away, this was not the time... Tonight might be though.

"Done," she exclaimed, entering the kitchen, drying her hair.

"Great, just be a sec," he exclaimed, and went to have his shower. She smiled after him, and pushed away an image of him.. showering. Instead she made herself a cup of coffee, pacing around it the kitchen. Funny how at home she felt. Even if her moving in was not like that it was beginning to feel a bit like.. that. And despite sleeping with him, it didn't feel like anything had changed between them.. it was more like they had added an extra layer. Maybe it was the situation, or maybe..

"Not yet," she told herself, "don't go there yet. Wait." She heard him hum on a tune in the shower, then he suddenly stopped dead.

"CCCCCCCCCCCCOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOLD!" he screamed, and she almost fell over the counter laughing. She heard the water being turned off, and a very wet and cold Frank entered the kitchen.

"You used up all the hot water!" he accused, and she nodded, falling over in a fit of laughter. "I'm.. sorry.." she gasped, but only laughed harder when he looked at her sourly.

"Is it that funny?" he asked, and she only nodded. He found himself wanting to laugh with her, it was becoming harder and harder to stay mad. Especially since he hadn't seen her laugh this hard since.. since, well, since it had happened.

"I guess I should have said yes to that sharing offer," he muttered. She nodded, totally out of breath from laughing so hard. And he found he wasn't so mad after all as he went upstairs to get properly dressed.

II

"Morning Jack!" Frank called out as he and Rachel entered the small cafe.

"Morning Frank.. Rach.."

"She absolutely insisted on coming," Frank explained as they sat

down.

"I bet she did," Jack remarked dryly, casting a glance at her. She looked about to burst with energy. Determined energy. The desperation and bursting with grief period seemed to have passed, and he didn't have to look far for the cause. The lovebite on her neck told volumes too. She had tried to hide it, but he wasn't a cop for nothing. He decided not to comment on it though.

"Carl Anderson," he instead said, "quite a guy who's gotten around. Suspected for drug smuggling, bribing officers of the law, obstructing justice, murder.. you name it. But he's gotten away every time. Thanks to his brilliant lawyer."

"Jonathon," she sighed, and he nodded, "he always was a smart lawyer."

"And there's moreâ€| look at this."

They both leaned over to gaze at the paper he was holding.

"Accused of murderâ€| but the lead witness ended up dead, shot in the chest twice!"

"Interesting. You think Jonathon knew?"

"That would be a safe bet," she replied, grabbing the paper from Jack to look at it properly.

"Ya want anything?" Frank asked as the waitress approached their table.

"Just coffee, thanks," she replied, obviously in deep thoughts.

"3 coffees, please," Frank told the waitress, and she drifted off again.

"I remember.. David," her voice only cracked slightly as she said his name, "telling me about 'the angry man who screamed at dad till he turned blue in the face'. He wasn't too specific, and I didn't think too much of it at the time."

"When was this?"

"The day before, I think. But Jonathon was an expert at making people angry with him."

"I'll say," Jack remarked, a second before Frank was about to say the same thing. They gave each other a funny stare, the Frank got up.

"Nature calls," he winked, "I'll just be a tic."

"Righto," she replied, watching him as he walked off, sending him her "Don't-pretend-to-not-know-what-you're-doing-Francis" look.

An uncomfortable silence settled, neither knowing exactly what to say. Finally Jack broke the silence.

"Soâ€| how long have you and Frank.. ya know," he asked, looking at

his hands.

"Not too long," she replied, "it just kinda happened."

"Were you going to tell me? Not just letting me see it on a parking lot?"

"I'm sorry about that.. I was looking for the right moment.. Look, Jack, if it weren't for Frank, maybe you and I could haveâ€œI dunno, but.."

"But he's very much here," Jack remarked.

"Yeah.."

"Well, as I said.. good luckâ€œ umm.. he's not that bad, but don't tell him I said that."

She managed to hide a chuckle. Frank had expressed some of the same. A couple of weeks ago she wouldn't have believed they would ever say even one nice thing about the other, but a couple of weeks ago she'd been a different person, in a different world. It felt like a lifetime ago now.

It had been another life.

"Thanks Jack," she said honestly, and reached out to touch his hand. He gave her a slight smile in return. A second later Frank re-emerged from the toilets section. His timing was more than a little suspicious. She gave him a look as he sat down. He was smiling that innocent boyish Frank smile, but she didn't buy it for one second. She knew him too well.

"How things at the station?" he asked Jack a second later, ignoring Rachel's stare.

"Hawker's not very happy," Jack replied, "to say the least. Especially because of the way you two just marched out of his office. But he's written it off as a leave of absence due to stress."

"Good old Jeff," Rachel remarked.

"Yeah, I had to spend two hours in his office picking up a message for you two."

"A message?" Frank asked.

"Yes. Officially, you two are on a break, so if he finds out you've been doing any police business, you're in deep shit. Unofficially, he told you two to be bloody careful."

"He really said that?" Rachel asked disbelievingly.

"In essence, yes."

"In essence?"

"Well, he did yell on for an hour about 'that damn stubborn woman and her pigheaded partner', but that's the essence of what he said the next hour, after he hadâ€œ" The clear ringing noise of a cell phone

interrupted.

"Hang on, I better get that," he said, picking it up, "yeah, Christey."

While he was busy talking to the person on the other side of the line, Rachel turned to Frank.

"I know what you were doing," she whispered, making sure Jack didn't hear.

"Me? Didn't do a thing," he grinned.

"Sure.. but thanks anyway," she replied, and the smile he sent her told her he had known what he was doing, but wasn't going to admit it in a thousand years.

"That was Helen," Jack exclaimed as he hung up, "turns out this Anderson guy owns a warehouse just down on the wharf."

"A warehouse for what?"

"Storing clothes."

"Storing clothes," Rachel repeated, "now how likely does it seem that a cloth storer would need a lawyer like Jonathon?"

"Not bloody likely!" Frank replied.

"Might be worth a visit, I reckon," Jack stated, and they all nodded. Determined.

II

Water Police HQ

"Helen?"

"Yeah, Jeff?"

"You heard anything from Jack today?"

"Umm.. not really, no."

"In other words, I shouldn't ask."

"Right."

"When you do hear from him, tell him Webster and Adams are looking for him."

"Any idea why?"

"They wanna ask about some guy named Carl Anderson."

"Right, I'll tell him." Helen sighed as Jeff went up the stairs again. So five people were looking for Carl Anderson. If he truly was David's killer, he deserved every horrible punishment she could think off.

"Be careful," she thought, "be careful, I couldn't handle loosing any of ya."

II

"Looks abandoned," Frank remarked as they pulled up in front of the warehouse. Jack was right behind them, in his own car.

"Yeah," she agreed, turning off the engine. A second later Jack did the same thing, and they all got out, looking at the huge building. It was almost falling apart, huge cracks in the roof, the windows and doors nailed shut.

"Doesn't look like anyone has been here for ages," Jack stated.

"The perfect cover," Frank observed, "for more.. illegal activities."

"Indeed. Shall we?"

"Yes, let's," Rachel replied.

All three approached the building carefully, scouting for any signs of life. It seemed totally abandoned. The entrance door had been nailed shut, but not very well, and it was easy pulling of the few planks that covered it.

Jack stepped in first, almost stepping in a huge pool of water just inside the door. The building seemed empty.

"So much for clothes," Frank muttered, "there's nothing here."

"It could be.."

"Hush," Rachel whispered, "listen."

And they all heard it. Distant footsteps, who fast turned into running footsteps.

"Hold it, Sydney Water Police!" Jack cried out as he took up pursuit, Frank and Rachel right on his tail.

Far ahead he could see a fleeing shadow, a man it seemed, dressed in dark clothing. He couldn't make out more than that.

"Hold it!" he cried again, and the figure did stop.. and fired a shot. It echoed throughout the empty warehouse to an overwhelming roar.

All three froze. Then Jack slowly keeled over, falling onto the floor with a thud.

"Jack!" Rachel cried out, reaching her cell phone.

"Officer down! I repeat, officer down!"

Frank continued the pursuit, casting a glance at Jack as he passed, seeing that he was only hit in the shoulder. He would make it, it seemed. Rachel was by his side already, pressing a hand against his bleeding shoulder. Jack would be alright.

That didn't stop Frank's anger, and he used it now, to practically fly after the guy. He was going to get him, nail him to the concrete. Punch his lights out. Arrest him, and throw away the key.

Their footsteps echoed through the large building as they ran. He could see the guy in front of him only as a fleeing shadow, he had a big head start, but Frank was gaining.

Another shot was fired, but it wasn't even close to hitting him. He heard Rachel call out something, but was too focused on the chase to hear what it was.

He almost tripped over the pipes scattered around, so did the guy he was pursuing. He could hear his target breath quite heavily now.

"Hold it!" he called out, of course to no avail.

The guy disappeared through one of the doors, and Frank followed him just a few seconds later. As soon as he stepped through the door, something hit him, and his world turned pit black.

II

"It's okay Jack, you're not badly hurt," Rachel assured him, trying to see where the hell Frank went to. She couldn't hear anything anymore, which rather worried her. Last thing she needed was another loss to cope with.

"Ouch!"

"Sorry!"

"Don't press so hard, I've been shot!"

"It's just a surface wound, no need to bitch around about it," she remarked, scanning the building once again.

"Where the hell did he go?" she muttered.

"Frank can look after himself, he'll..." Jack assured her,
"OUCH!"

"Stop being such a baby, Jack!"

"I am not, I have been shot! A little compassion would be nice."

Finally she could hear the distant sirens, quickly coming closer. An ambulance pulled up on the parking lot, and several paramedics appeared from within it.

"Over here!" she called out to the paramedics, as soon as they can reached her and Jack, she got up, running in the direction she had seen Frank disappear.

"Frank!" she called out. There was no reply.

"FRAAANK!"

"Over here!" came finally his voice, and ran so fast she almost tripped over some pipes. He was standing by a door out, clutching his head.

"Damn bastard knocked me down," he remarked.

"Lemme look," she insisted, and took his head in her hands.

"You'll be a little bruised, but it doesn't look too bad," she reported a few seconds later. Then she thwarted him hard on the arm.

"Don't scare me like that!"

"Sorry!"

"Yeah, you better be!" she exclaimed, then gave him a quick kiss, leaving him all confused. Then she dragged him back to where the paramedics were.

"Check his head," she ordered.

"Rach, I'm fine, I just.." She gave him a look, and he wisely decided to shut up. Better not to argue when she was in a mood like this, he knew from experience.

She wandered off while the paramedics were doing their job, walking over to the door where Frank had lost the guy. There was no sign of him, he was probably long gone by now.

He was still a fleeing shadow, but now she knew he was out there. And she was going to find him.

"You may have escaped for now," she said aloud, "but I'll get you. I'll get you."

II

He chuckled as he saw the fuss outside the warehouse. They had tried to get him, but he had slipped away. Too bad he hadn't shot the copper better, but nothing was perfect. Besides, that sill cop was not the target.

He had bigger fish to fry. And he would.

As the ambulance pulled off, he carefully followed it, making sure he stayed far enough away to not rot any suspicion. He was quite sure they hadn't gotten a proper look at him, but it was best to be careful.

He had gotten this far by being careful.

And there was yet much to be done.

II

"Heya mate," Frank called as he entered Jack's room, "looks like you got a bit of a beating."

"Same to you mate," Jack exclaimed, seeing Frank's bruised forehead.

"That's just a scratch.. But damnit, I nearly had him! I was this close."

"You get a glimpse of him?"

"Nope, just his back head, and his shadow. Crap!" Frank cursed, "so close, and yet.. Damn. And guess what?"

"What?"

"That warehouse.. they had a drug bust there, after an anomynious call."

"No wonder it was deserted."

"They didn't find anything too much though, it seems the operation moved at the last possible second. Drat! We almost had him.."

"We'll get him."

"Not we, Christey, I and Rachel will get him. You need to stay at the hospital a bit."

"Yeah.. You'll take good acre of her while I'm in here, I assume."

"The best," Frank replied, with a small grin.

"You don't know how lucky you are," Jack said with a sigh.

"Actually, I do. Speaking of which, maybe you could give me some advice on something.."

II

Rachel sighed. How long was Frank gonna be in there? How much did he and Jack have to talk about?

"They better not be talking about me," she muttered. If they were, she wouldâ€œ think of something very mean to do to them both.

She paced, and paced, and paced. Hospitals were too quiet. You could actually hear yourself think, and that wasn't necessarily a good thing.

For her thoughts were dominated by one thing, and she couldn't afford crying any more. She had to focus on the goal. Stopping, she suddenly realized it was here, in this hospital, they had..

"No. We're not going there now, or ever," she firmly told her mind. For once, it seemed to listen.

She paced the hallway floor again. Frank still hadn't appeared, it was beginning to really annoy her.

The cell phone rang. Annoyed, she picked it up, and answered it

rather briskly.

"Goldstein."

"Hey, it's Vanessa."

"Vanessa!"

"Yeah, I heard you wanted me to call.. I mean, I talked to Julia.. and I'm so sorry about David. I really am. If anyone had done that to my kidâ€œ! I know I'd be crawling at the walls. So really, I'm so sorry."

"I knowâ€œ!"

"So I digged up everything on that case, figured I owned it to you as well as David. And it looks like you're onto something. Rumors were flying all over the place, about bribing.. and they were mainly directed at the judge in that case."

"The judge.."

"Yeah. I were actually about to look into the matter myself when the mistrial happened."

"Very convenient."

"It looks like it, but I doubt I would have been able to prove anything.. Which makes me think someone got cold feet."

"Jonathon," she breathed.

"Yeah, I think your ex suddenly found himself too deep in something, and tried to clean up, to pull out..."

"But couldn't," Rachel finished.

"That would be my guess too. Listen Rach, I'll look more into it and keep you posted, okay?"

"Yeah, great, thanks Vanessa, I gotta go." She hung up a second before Frank joined her.

"Who was that?"

"Dad," she lied. He looked at her for a second as if he saw right through her, then he seemed to shrug it off.

"Jack's gonna be fine.. his shoulder will be sore for quite a while, but the bullet missed any arteries."

"And you?" she said concerned, looking at his bruised forehead.

"It's hardly even a scratch," he remarked. She gave him a "don't-be-so-macho" look and stroke his cheek affectionately. Their gazes locked.

"Listen Rach, I was gonna ask youâ€œ!"

"Goldstein and Holloway," came Hawker's voice, and Frank cursed inside. What a bloody timing!

"Jeff," they both greeted.

"I'm assuming you have a good explanation for this incident?"

"Ummmmâ€|"

"You were having breakfast with Jack, when you saw an suspicious exchange go down, and decided to pursue it. Interesting."

"Huh? Actually.."

"Whereupon you came under hostile fire, and Jack was hurt. I see."

"But.."

"That is a good explanation, yes."

They both stared at him like he had apples growing on his head.

"I'll remind you that you are on leave though, so leave police business to us." And with that he left, leaving them staring surprised after him.

"Wow," Frank finally said, "he's all of a sudden become our best friend."

"Yeah, I'll say. I think he and Helen might have had a few talks. Listen, I'm gonna pop in and check on Jack, okay?"

"Sure, I'll just wait out here." She gave him a warm smile as she disappeared out of view. As soon as she had, he turned to the counter.

"May I use the phone?"

"Go ahead."

"Thanks." He waited patiently as it rang in the other end.

"Hey Vanessa, it's Frank.. Yeah.. Hey, listen did you just talk to Rach.. Uh huh.. really? Yes, I knowâ€|Yeah, I see, thanks. C ya!"

He hung up with a frown. She had been lying. But why? Why was she hiding something from him? And just what more did she know that she didn't share? She wasn't thinking of going after the guy all alone?

He was still in deep thought when Rachel came back.

"Frank? Francis? Hello, the Earth to Francis James Holloway!"

"Huh?"

"You look like you have a million things on your mind."

"Just a few," he replied, trying to device a tactic to get her to open up. She gave him a look.

"What's going on Holloway?" she asked as they began walking down the hallway towards the exit.

"Um.. I was just thinking about the prosecutor in the case that Jonathon dropped so suddenly. Ya know who it was?"

"I don't think so," she said with a straight poker face. He frowned again.

"I think it was Vanessa," he remarked. She glanced up at him.

"Could be," she replied. He shook his head.

"You have been talking to her!"

"Maybe I have, but soâ€¢?"

"Damnit Rach, I thought we were together on this!"

"I don't want to drag you too far into this!"

"I am already in it!" he shot back as they reached the exit and came out in the sunlight. Neither noticed the car watching them.

"No one asked you and Jack to stick your nosyâ€¢!"

"You did ask us! You're way out of control, damnit!"

"You're out of line!"

They stared angrily at each other.

"What the hell is the matter with ya!" he cried out.

"What the hell is the matter with you!" she shot back.

"I know you're grieving, but you're not the only one, ya know! Bloody hell, you.."

"I don't need your pity Frank!" she interrupted.

"It's not bloody pity, Goldstein," he replied angrily, "it's love. There, I've said it. Love! You're so damn scared of that, you're willing to do anything to avoid it!"

"I learned my lesson with Jonathon, with Knockerâ€¢" she began

"I'm not THEM, damnit!"

"I didn't ask for you to go bloody falling in love with me! I didn't ask for it!" she screamed at him.

"Well, you have it now! So what are you going to do, walk away!"

She stared at him for another second, then she turned from him and

started walking. She forced herself not to imagine the look of hurt on his face, for that would make her run back to him. She just walked on, then almost ran away.

How dared he? How DARED he? She thought she had finally worked out the thing she and Frank had and now he threw love in her face. Damn him!

She froze at the sound of an engine. That roar of a car starting. She spun around, and saw the gray Peugeot heading straight for Frank with ramming speed.

"Frank! Behind you!" she screamed, and he turned around to find himself in the headlights of the approaching car. In her mind an image of the car hitting him, throwing him over the hood appeared, and she saw it so clearly she thought it would happen.

"I cannot loose him too!" her mind screamed over and over.

For a moment her vision seemed to come true, then he reacted, jumping out of the way, the car missing him by mere centimeters. It was heading for her now, but she quickly stepped out of the way.

The car passed her close enough to allow her to read the license, and get a glimpse of a reddened face, dark hair and an excited smile.

"He's enjoying it," her mind registered.

Then all her senses returned to Frank, who was lying in a pile of debris, head down.

"Frank! Frank, are you alright?"

"Bloody hell," she heard his curse, popping up his head, and that was a sure sign that he was alright.

"I'm okay," he said as she ran to his side, then suddenly found himself in a powerful hug.

She was whispering something too, something he couldn't quite make out.

"What?"

"I love you," she muttered, "I love you."

He had to have a hearing problem. But he could swear his ears worked perfectly.. On the other side, she couldn't just have saidâ€¦ No, not Rachel, she hadn't even touched a drop of alcohol this day.

"Rach?" he asked, and she released him from the hug, looking a little embarrassed. Maybe he hadn't heard so wrong after all! And maybe that meant this was the time tooâ€¦

"Frank! Rachel!" came Helen's voice, and he could barely hold back a curse. That bloody timing AGAIN!

"We're okay Helen," Rachel assured her, "the car tried to hit Frank, but missed. It was Peugeot, gray I think, license read DH

70719."

"I'll check it out," Helen promised as Frank got up from the ground. He locked gazes with Rachel, communicating a "I'm-sorry-let's-not-fight" as well as he could.

She sent him a "I'm-sorry-too" in return, and his features softened. In fact, he looked almost boyish.

Helen was staring at them, as if she could see what was going on. The woman wasn't dumb after all. Maybe it was time to take it somewhere more private..

"Come on Frank, I'll take you home and get ya cleaned up. Call as soon as you find something?" she asked Helen.

"Sure. Take care of that big head of his, okay?"

"Will do, Helen," she called out, almost dragging Frank to the car.

Helen looked after them, grinning a bit. She knew it would happen sooner or later, and she was pretty confident it now had. It would be fun observing that relationship.

"Rachel!"

"Hush, not now Francis. I don't want to argue just now."

II

She indeed hadn't, Frank noted an hour later. She had definitely had other things on her mind than arguing. It was like she suddenly had a need to be close to him. He didn't really mind.

He stretched out on the couch a bit, making Rachel shift position on top of him. He held her rearrange the blanket so it covered both of them.. their clothes was all over the place.. literally.

She didn't seem very willing to talk, and he didn't push her. Whatever it was that was going through her head, it was her business. He hoped she would make it his business too.. but he knew better than to push her into opening up.

They hadn't said a word since coming home, the argument was far from resolved, it was rather put temporarily aside.

He let his hand slowly caress her neck, telling her he was there if she needed to talk. She snuggled up closer to him,wishing they could stay like that forever.

The phone interrupted their peace. Sighing, he shifted position so he could reach the phone and answer it.

"Holloway."

"It's Helen. Listen, I checked the car.. It belongs to Carl Anderson. I told the cars to keep an eye out for him."

"Great. Thanks Helen."

Rachel looked at him questionably as he hung up.

"It was his car," he confirmed, "Carl Anderson."

She nodded slowly, tracing circles on his chest.

"Frank?"

"Yeah?"

"How far will you follow?"

"All the way," he promised, "all the way."

II

Carl Anderson eyed his target. There it was. The man was saying something, he couldn't quite make out the words. It didn't matter anyway.

He had his target clear in sight, and nothing could stop him.

He took out the weapon and rang the doorbell.

II

"Frank, someone's at the door."

"Yeah.. hmmmmâ€|" He looked around him to see if any of his clothes were nearby, and finally located his pants under the table.

He quickly got them on, then went to the door and opened.

"You?"

II

Carl Anderson waited patiently for the man to open the door. Finally he heard footsteps, and readied the shotgun.

"You?" Jonathon exclaimed as he opened the door, then his eyes fell on the shotgun.

"Hello, Mr. Goldstein," Carl smirked, "we're taking a drive. We have much to discuss."

"I don't thinkâ€|"

"Oh yes, you do. This gun says so."

II

"You?" Frank exclaimed, staring at Webster and Adams.

"Hello again," Webster said, obviously making an effort to be polite, "may we come in?"

"Just a sec.. umm.."

He shut the door in their face, knowing it would look mighty strange.

"Rach, we got guests! Webster and Adams are here!"

"Crap!" she called out, "Shit! Okay..Hell, where's my.."

"Try under the couch," he suggested.

"Found them," she called out a second later, entering the hallway. She had managed to get on more clothes than him, but not by much. This would certainly spark the rumors about him and Rachel, Frank figured as he reopened the door.

Neither Detective Adams or Webster seemed even slightly surprised to find her there as well, only half dressed.

"Come in," Frank offered.

"Thank you. You know, you two are damn lucky we don't stay angry," Adams smiled. Both him and Webster seemed to ooze with that bitter contentment you only have when you know you've cracked the case.

"Carl Anderson," Webster exclaimed, tossing a picture on the living room table. Rachel cast one glance at it.

"It's the guy who tried to ram us," she said confidently.

"We figured. Our friend here was born in Sweden, but he had one Aussie parent and moved here at the age of 7. Started his.. 'career' at the age of 16, stealing cars. We've been after this guy for ages, but he always seems to slip away, Much thanks to your ex."

"Nothing new there," Rachel remarked.

"Anyway," Webster continued, "last year he moved up a league, getting involved in the drug smuggling business. We trapped up our investigation at that point, and managed to make a bust. That gave us plenty of evidence against him and some of his partners, even though they managed to move the operation from that warehouse at the last possible moment. We still had a case. Then, mysteriously, the evidence began disappearing on us. He had to have some well connected people in his corner to pull that off."

"And you're thinking Jonathon was somehow involved?"

"We're not sure as to what degree, but yes. Everything points to that, and besides, my gut feeling tells me he's far from innocent, and my gut feeling hasn't failed me yet."

"But a month ago something happened," Rachel more stated than asked.

"Yes. We think your ex discovered just how deep he had gotten himself pulled in, and decided to get out of it. We suspect he confronted the judge with some evidence, and made him declare a mistrial."

"And that pissed Carl off."

"That's a good bet. He thought he was getting off.. now the case is open. And what's more, I think he got nervous about the amount of information Jonathon had.. and decided to give him a warning."

"David," she breathed. Both nodded, and she felt Frank's hand supportive on her arm.

"Yes. And now he seems to have taken an interest in you two as well."

"Enough to try to ram us anyway," Frank stated.

"Yep. We'll have plenty to charge him with. Listen, I'm sorry about.." Adams began, but she waved him off.

"It's okay. If you two had touched a case of mine.. I would have treated you two far worse."

"So now what?" Frank asked.

"We're looking for Carl. He won't get away. We have enough to build a case against him, a strong case, and I ain't getting a mistrial this time. Anyways.. we better get going. We just wanted you two to know," Webster said, both he and Adams getting up. Frank walked them to the door.

Just as they left, Adams leaned over to whispered in Frank's ear.

"Your partner's bra is hanging from one of the lamps, mate," he said with a wink, then waved as he left.

Frank stared at him for a second, realizing he had to rethink a few things about those detectives, then closed the door.

Rachel was still sitting on the couch. She felt drained.. tired.. and relieved. David hadn't been killed because of her. She knew that now for sure, and it was as if a stone had been lifted of her heart.

"I.. can make some food.. umm.." Frank tried to think of something to say.

"Carl Anderson," she said slowly. Hate had a face now. And a name. Without a shadow of a doubt she knew he was the guy who had killed her son.

"They'll get him, Rachel."

"I'll get him," she replied in a voice that sent a chill down his spine.

"It's over," he said slowly, "it's over. We don't have to do anything more. They know who did it, and they will get him, and lock the bastard away."

She didn't look convinced.

"That kind of brings me toâ€¢!"

She finally looked up at him.

"Not tonight," she said, "I'm tired. Can we talk about it tomorrow."

"Of course."

"Thanks.." she closed her eyes, and nearly fell over. She was tired indeed.

"Come on, let's go to bed," he offered, "to sleep this time." She let out a sigh, then nodded in agreement and followed him upstairs. She was silent as they crawled into bed, silent as he wrapped her in his arms, silent as he fell asleep.

Her mind was wide awake though, processing all the information it had been handed.

There was something they had overlooked. If David's death indeed had been a warning, Jonathon had surely ignored it. So maybe Carl's interest in her and Frank had been merely to distract them, to move their attention from the real target.

Jonathon.

This wasn't over yet. And she had a fair idea where she had to go.

Frank was peacefully asleep, and she looked down at him, stroked his cheek slowly.

"I love you," she wispered, "please forgive me."

She didn't know if he would though. She had promied him they would do it together.. but this she had to do on her own.

II

"What do you want?" Jonathon asked.

"You thought you could just walk away! Oh no Goldstein, taking down your son was just the start!"

"David! You killed David!"

"Didn't see that coming, now did you Mr. I'm-so-smart-lawyer. Well, here's another tidbit for ya. No body knows where you are. You're completely in my hands. And we're gonna have a long chat about that case you know.. and how you betrayed me."

"I had no idea you were into.."

"Oh come on, where did you think the money was coming from?"

"Iâ€¢!"

"You're so smart, you had to know. And you even helped me.. All those witnesses you found out stuff about.. I used that to threaten them."

"Oh my God.."

"But you got cold feet, ya blood coward! You went to that judge and got a mistrial. We were winning! I would have been a free man.. And don't think I didn't know that call to the police that caused that drug bust weren't from you! I was lucky I was able to move it, so they didn't find too much. So ya see.. I have plenty of reason to be angry with ya!"

"Then why.. Why David?"

"Why not? You were going to take my freedom away, so I took away something importent from you as well. I was gonna do your ex too.. but then I realized you hate her, and she was in love with some other guy. I felt a bit bad about killing her son.. but it was your fault. You made me do it!"

"You can't possibly think you'll get away with this!"

"No? I think I will. There's enough smart lawyers out there.. and money has never been a problem"

For the first time in his life, Jonathon Goldstein found that he was scared. Really scared.

II

At first, he had no idea why he woke up. It was in the middle of the night, the whole house was silent, there was no reason he should wake up.

The he realized he could only hear his own breathing.

"Rachel?" he called out, "Rachel!"

There was no reply.

"Damnit!" He knew what she was doing. She had gone after the guy alone. He stumbled downstairs, getting on clothes as he went. He noticed the note on the kitchen counter at once.

"Frank.

>I'm sorry, but I have to do this. I do love you.
Rachel."

His heart stopped. She wouldn't be leaving a note like that unless.. unless..

He could loose her yet.

"Damnit, think Holloway, think!" he told himself. Where would she go?

The phone rang, and he jumped at the sound as if it had been a gunshot.

"Yeah!"

"It's Jeff. Jonathon's gone missing."

"So has Rach, I think she has gone after the guy."

"Where?"

"I dunno.." he paused. Of course he knew.

"The warehouse."

As he gave Jeff the address, he tried to send her a message.

"Please, please, don't do this, don't make me loose you."

II

She didn't know exactly what made her look to the warehouse. Maybe just a gut feeling.

But as soon as she pulled up, and saw the Peugeot, she knew. She had been right. Pure determination filled her. She was going to end it. Right here, right now.

And then it would be over.

She parked the a bit away from the building, slowly getting out, pulling up her gun. As she approached the building, she heard angry voices from within. She couldn't quite make out what they were arguing about, but she knew one of the voices to be Jonathons.

It was very dark, but she could see their silhouettes. Not knowing who was who made her not dare to take a shot though. Instead she went inside, as quietly as she could. They were arguing so loudly she doubted they would have heard her even if she had made a loud entrance.

"You bastard!" came Jonathon's voice

"I was only doing what I had too!"

"No one forced you to kill my son!"

She could see him now. See Carl Anderson. The man who had killed her David. Her mind cried out in one voice:

"Kill him! KILL HIM!"

She found herself breathing hard, battling an inner war. She wanted so badly to pull the trigger, just now, to see Carl Anderson drop to the ground and bleed.

Bleed like David had.

But another part of her won.

"This is the Sydney Water Police, freeze!" she called out.

Both men froze. She had clear aim of Carl, but still couldn't pull the trigger. He was staring at her.

"This wasn't supposed to happen.." he whispered.

"You killed my son, you bastard!" she cried out.

"I.. I was punishing him!" he explained, pointing at Jonathon.

"He was my son too!"

"And mine," came Jonathon's voice, and he jumped on Carl, going for the gun. They rolled on the floor, she ran towards them, but Carl managed to get a swing at Jonathon, knocking him to the floor. And the he ran.

She ran after, her feet being wings.

The hunt had began.

II

Frank had never driven so fast in his life, he nearly crashed at least 10 times, but he didn't dare slowing down. Finally, he was at the building, and he jumped out of the car, not bothering to shut the car door. Fear gave him wings, and he ran inside.

Jonathon was lying on the floor, twisting in pain.

"Where are they?"

"I.."

"WHERE ARE THEY!"

"That way," Jonathon pointed, and Frank ran.

He could see them now.

II

She finally caught up to him, knocking him onto the floor. Hatred gave her strength, and knocked him hard, very hard. He滑ed across the floor, then tried to get up, but she had clear aim now.

"Stop!" she cried out, "I have you in my aim and I'll shoot!"

He turned around slowly. Here he was, the source of her pain. It was him. She knew it. Every fiber of her body was telling her that was the guy. It was Carl Anderson. Her son's killer.

They were both breathing hard. She locked gazes with him, saw the fear in his eyes.

"I have come to kill you," her eyes told him. He tried to swallow, but his mouth had turned dry. He was scared. Dying was not an option he had considered. But now it was staring him in the eye. She was Death.

She was Death. She was going to kill this miserable excuse of a man, she was going to kill him with two shots. Just like he had killed David.

She could hear noises behind her, and she instinctively knew it to be Frank.

"Go away Frank!" she warned.

"I can't let you do this, no matter how much I'd like to see this bastard drop dead," he said gently, approaching her from the side.

"He killed David!" she spat, and took clearer aim. Right in the chest.

"Don't do it Rachael.. don't let him turn you into a killer! You will hate yourself afterwards. Don't let him take more from you than he already has."

"He killed David," she whispered hatefully, "he took him from me."

"I know, but this won't bring him back. Please don't Rach.. Don't." She looked at him, saw the plea in his eyes. Then she closed her eyes.. and fired.

Carl Anderson staggered, froze in shock, in anticipation of the pain, then realized he hadn't been hit. The shot had went over his head. He stared widely at Rachel, then reached for something inside his jacket.

He never got that far. Frank's shot hit him squarely in the heart, knocking him to the floor. His gun hit the floor a second later.

"Youâ€| shot me!" the guy exclaimed, then his face twisted in pain, and his head fell lifeless down.

And above his lifeless body Rachel and Frank's gazes met, and he walked up to her and embraced her.

It was over.

II

The police cars came shortly after, sirens howling, lights flashing. And he told them what had happened. A dangerous criminal had been shot in self-defense. That was what the report would say, he knew.

Webster and Adams came pretty fast, and the way they looked at him, he knew it was over. They wouldn't press the fact that Rachel had gone after the guy. They knew, and understood.

After all questions had been answered, he approached Rachel, who stood looking after the ambulance who had drive away. He knew what was bothering her.

She was watching the sun slowly crawl up the horizon. It was morning, the sky had begun to get back it's blue color, and the stars had dropped from view.

"Hey," he said.

"Hey.."

"You okay?" She shifted a bit.

"I'm sorry.."

"Hush, it's okay. I understand, ya know."

"I wanted to kill him," she said slowly.

"Ya missed that shot deliberately," he replied. She glanced up at him.

"Did I?"

"Ya missed deliberately," he insisted.

"I dunno Frankâ€| "

"But I do. I know ya Rachâ€| I know ya. You missed deliberately." She nodded slightly, accepting it, then let him hold her. Across the parking lot he could see Jonathon staring at all the police cars.

"I'll be right back," he said to Rachel, and she nodded, still a bit numb from all the emotions. He squeezed her shoulder lightly, then crossed the parking lot to where Jonathon stood, still staring.

"Detective Holloway," Jonathon said, "you took him out?"

"Yes," Frank replied, and let that info sink in before he continued.

"I may never be able to prove it," he began, "but I know ya were involved in that smuggling business. And because of that your son died, and a wonderful woman lost her son."

Jonathon said nothing, just stared down at the pavement.

"And living with that knowledge may be the biggest punishment anyone can give you," Frank continued, "but if you blink the wrong way again, I'll lock you up and throw away the key. And one more thing.. You don't know what you let go. You truely don't know."

And with that he looked at Rachel, then back at Jonathon again.

"You don't know how much you have lost," he concluded, and walked away. From a broken man, he knew, but Rachel had made it from hell stil walking.

He knew David would have been proud of his mom right now.

"Come on," he said, slipping an arm around her waist when he reached her, "let's get out of here. Want me to follow you anywhere?"

"Home," she whispered, "follow me home."

"To your house?" he asked surprised. She shook her head.

"Your house," she said, with the faintest smile.

4. Part Four

So he took her home. As they reached the door, he was tempted to lift her up and carry her over the threshold, but he figured that was going a bit too far. She wasn't much of a romantic, anyway.

"Our home," he thought. She had called it home.

"Stop grinning so silly, Francis," she remarked as she dropped down on his couch.

"Sorry..." he muttered, still standing.

"I don't bite," she said when he made no signs towards joining her on the couch.

"Actually..." he began, "you did..."

"Sit down!" she commanded, and he finally did, only to get up a second later.

"What's going on?" she asked.

"Do you want to go back? To the Station I mean." he asked seriously.

"I don't know," she replied, getting up as well, "I don't think I can."

"Okay..." They both grew silent for a while, him pacing, her just staring out the window at the quiet sea.

"Now what?" she asked, throwing a glance in his direction. He just shrugged his shoulders.

"We take it as it comes," he offered.

"I can't go back," she insisted.

"I know. Not now anyway. And no one's forcing us to."

"'Us'?"

"Yeah..." He gave her a sly smile.

"I can live with an us," she smiled back, "but..."

"Hush," he said with a with a silence gesture, "no but's. Let's just do it."

"We're not on the life in general subject anymore, are we?" she asked, and he frowned slightly, trying to think of a way to bring up his next thought.

"I sorta have a question," he said after a while.

"What?" "Okay, let's say hypothetically... if I were thinking about asking this woman to marry me.. hypothetically." She drew in a sharp breath, but kept her cool, playing along.

"Yeah? Anyone I know?"

"Kinda," he replied with half a smile.

"Ya like her then?" she asked with only the slightest tremor in her voice.

"Yeah, I like her a lot," he said, still with the silly half-smile.

"And ya reckon she likes you too?"

"Yeah, I reckon," he said, confidently.

"Ya thinking she's the one?" She mentally shook herself for being unable to keep the tremor out of her voice.

"Get a grip, Goldstein," she firmly told herself.

"Yeah," he replied, "so what do ya think she'll say?"

"Oh I reckon she'll say yes."

"Really?" he asked with a broad smile.

"Really. You're then irresistible charmer, right?"

"She resisted it for quite some time," he remarked, then grew serious as he took a step closer.

"You know it's you, right?"

"Yeah," she grinned, and he took another step closer.

"So..."

"Yes. I'm crazy for saying this, but yes!" The spark in his eyes was unmistakably there now, and she saw it light up, a light that seemed to fill her up. He stared at her for two more seconds, then swept her into a powerful hug, squeezing the air out of her.

"Okay....I ... Can't... Breathe!" she gasped, and he immediately released her.

"Sorry," he muttered, the stared at her once again.

"You really..."

"Yes, yes, YES!" she cried out, laughing, and he soon joined in. They laughed and laughed, until they both collapsed in fits of hysteria. Finally they were out of breath, and she rolled over to lay on top of him and gaze into his eyes.

"Thank you," she said earnestly, "for everything."

"I love you," he replied, and managed to sneak in a kiss before she could reply.

"You little bastard! I can't believe you won me over."

"Took a lot of hard effort," he teased. She rolled her eyes, then got up.

"Rachel?" he asked worried.

"There's one more thing I need, Frank..."

"Name it," he said, getting up beside her.

"I need a lift.. to the cemetery."

He nodded, and offered her a hand. With a slight smile she took it, and he squeezed it lightly.

"Let's go," he offered. She let him drive, looking out the window all the time, watching the cars drive by. As they approached the cemetery, she felt her resolve begin to falter. It was the finality of it that scared her. And a part of her wanted so desperately to hold on.. but it was time. It was time.

And there they were. The cold, empty, silent cemetery. He pulled up, turned off the engine and turned to look at her, obviously concerned.

"Are ya sure?"

"I hafta do this, Frank..."

"I know..."

She pushed the door open, gathering all her strength, and walked out. Taking a deep breath, she marched up to the gravestone. It looked the same. A part of her wanted to run this time too.. but the part of her insisting she had to do it had grown stronger. Flowers covered the grave. The single red rose she had placed there, had long since died, and she picked it up. Tears fell silently down on the grass.

"David..." she whispered. Frank's hand rested comfortingly on her shoulder, and she silently thanked him.

"I miss you..." she began, feeling her voice crack. She bit her bottom lip.

"I found who did it," she added after a while, and reached out a hand to touch the stone. It felt cold under her fingers. So very cold. As her heart had been.

"You'll always be in my heart.. I love you..." she closed her eyes, then withdrew her hand.

"Goodbye."

She got up, threw one last look at the stone, at David's name, then turned around. A sense of terrible loss, yet peace filled her. There would always be a gaping hole in her life. But life went on. Life, for better or worse, always went on.

Frank stood by the gravestone a little longer. There was something he needed to say.

"Your mom.. is not a murderer," he said quietly. Somehow, he thought it was important for David to know that. Then he followed Rachel to the car.

She was leaning on it, wiping away tears.

"I thought it would be easier..."

"And it wasn't," he stated.

"No.. But I can live with it. It's not smoldering me anymore, it's..." She waved a hand helplessly, not knowing how to explain it. He looked like he understood though. He too had carried many a loss.

He looked at her intently, then shifted a bit.

"Look Rach.. what I said about having a baby and such.. I meant it."

"Not only do ya wanna marry me, ya wanna have kids too," she joked

"I'm serious," he insisted, "we can do the whole thing, ya know."

"One thing at a time, Frank."

"Wedding first then," he concluded. She shook her head a bit.

"Are you sure ya want to do this?"

"I want you to have it all Rach.. Ya deserve it all. I want to do it right." She reached out to touch his cheek.

"You have given me so much already. You don't hafta marry me."

"I want to, " he insisted, "besides, I like the name Rachel Holloway."

"Who said anything about changing my last name?" she said with a raised eyebrow.

"I assumed..."

"Don't assume," she grinned.

"Okay, no assuming. Anything else I should know?"

"Yeah.. I'm driving!" He tossed her the car keys with a small chuckle, and she caught them in midair, giving him a challenging smile. Throwing one last look at the stone, she gave it a silent

promise.

"I'm letting you go... but not from my heart," she promised. The tears would keep coming, and the pain would never go away, but time would make her stronger and allow her to carry it easier. And maybe time would let her and Frank work it out too. Stranger things had happened. Well, stranger things could happen. Besides, David would approve, she was sure. And maybe she and Frank could raise a little army of Holloway's and Goldstein's. Maybe they would go back to work, maybe they wouldn't. The beauty of it all though was, it would be together, no matter what they did.

Together.

FIN

End
file.